महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK 4

THE COMPLETE VIRATA PARVA

Transcreated from Sanskrit

by P. Lāl

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Virāta Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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महाभारत

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The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK FOUR

The Complete Virāta Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. St. Xavier's Lifetime Professor of Excellence award, 2005. Conferred Doctorate of Literature by University of Calcutta in 2006 for "literary scholarship, specially the seminal English transcreation of the Mahabharata." Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lal began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 300 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

Preface

Is "unspeakable" the correct word to describe any print-culture version of an oral epic such as the *Mahābhārata*? There is no word for "book" in Sanskrit; "*boi*", "*pustaka*" and "*kitab*" are Persian and Arabic, taken over into the Indian languages. "*Grantha*", the closest Sanskrit equivalent, means "gathered together". One dictionary definition of "grantha" is "an artificial collection of words of thirty-two syllables – the śloka."

Precisely. The heartbeat of the oral mahā-kāvyas – the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* – is the invention and use of the śloka verse form. It is to Vālmīki and Vyāsa what iambic pentameter is to Shakespeare, and the ballad metre to English narrative poetry. What a wondrous vehicle it is! Perfectly suited to the needs of Sūta story-telling, it consists basically of four breath-pauses, ideal for the prāṇa in-breath to variously and vividly manoeuvre while narrating the kathā.

अय काले शुभे प्राप्ते	atha kāle śubhe prāpte
तियौ पुण्ये क्षणे तथा।	tithau puṇye kṣaṇe tāthā
आजुहाव महीपालान्	ājuhāva māhipālān
भीमो राजा स्वयम्वरे ॥	bhīmo rājā śvayamvare

(The Nala-Damayantī Kathā in the Vana Parva)

This magical metre (four *pādas* of eight syllables each) is traditionally credited as the discovery of Vālmīki, employed in the composition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* ("from *śoka* came *śloka*"). But it is Vyāsa who perfects it in the *Mahābhārata,* and perhaps nowhere better in the epic, I think, than in the Virāṭa Parva.

The speed with which the story of this parva unfolds is breathtaking. And unless one knows how to take breath – and how exhale breath – the richness of the narration will simply not emerge. In an attempt to catch the oral flexibility of Vyāsa's epic, I have tried hard to approximate in English his breath-based verse-form. It's fruitless trying to achieve the syllabic glory of Sanskrit with the accented excellence of English. Apples are not oranges. But both are fruits. It is possible through breath-pauses and breath-spans to convey the blood-rhythm that marks the essence of

successful story-telling. I invite my listener to be receptive to this quality when, while reading this transcreation, he hears and overhears the exchanges between Sudeṣṇā and *Sairandhrī* Draupadī, Uttara and Bṛhannalā-Arjuna, Draupadī and enraged Bhīma, the giggling girls of Virāṭa's court and pig-tailed Arjuna, and all the other fast-paced episodes of this drama-laden parva.

In his Introduction to *The Mahābhārata : A Play Based on the Indian Classic Epic* (translated from the French by Peter Brook; Harper &-Row, 1987), Jean-Claude Carrière wrote, "In Calcutta we met a hospitable and enthusiastic man, Professor P. Lal, who was finishing a complete translation into English verse of *The Mahābhārata*, which he called a 'transcreation'. He too was most encouraging, convinced that the great Indian poem could speak in different voices to the rest of the world."

"*Speak* in different voices", but in the blood-rhythm of Sūta story-telling – yes, that is the secret of the *Mahābhārata*'s success over the ages as a communicator of whatever is permanent in artha, kāma, dharma and mokṣa. How does it matter if I know who done it? It's the Sūta's way of describing why-dun-it, how-dun-it and do-I-or-do-I-not-do-it that matters. That perception is the only reality; all the rest is illusion, walking shadows, strutting and fretting their hour upon the stage, signifying, ultimately, only what the Sūta makes of them.

This can create curious trip-ups. When you speak, you don't give notes. No *ṭikās*, please. On page 195, Section 44 śloka 18, Arjuna explains that he is called Bībhatsu (the Loathsome, Dreadful, Horrific One) because he has never committed any atrocity on the battlefield. That's weird – but Uttara (and translators and commentators) accepts this without questioning, because it's done so fast, and we've run into the next śloka. There's no time to challenge or nitpick. Elsewhere, in many places in the epic, Krishna's appellation as "Janārdana" is explained as "Saviour of People" or "Redeemer of People". But "Jana" (people) with "ardana" (punisher) add up to "Tormentor, Punisher, or Grinder of People".

Such are the delights (and travails) of speedy story-telling courtesy of the Sūta's śloka-fluency.

Kolkata
April 2006

Dedication

With friendship
and admiration
and gratitude
to
JAMES COOK &-BARBARA COOK
&
DONALD JOHNSON & JEAN JOHNSON
whose abounding hospitality
and lovingkindness
in Albion (Michigan)
and Rutherford (New Jersey)
during my frequent sojourns
of Visiting Lecturer trips and Professorships
in the democratic Virāṭa Kingdom of the U.S. of A.
between 1960 and 1980
provided me a home away from home
and made sweet the pains of prosperous exile
by opening up vistas of tongues in trees
books in the running brooks.
sermons in stones and good in everything
than which surely no blessing is greater

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ ।
Devīṁ Sarasvatīm Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ॥

INVOCATION

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

SECTION ONE

1 "Afraid of Duryodhana," asked Janamejaya,
"how did my great-grandfathers
live secretly
in the city of Virāṭa?

2 How did the husband-devoted,
mahā-fortune-favoured Draupadī
live in secret, venerating Brahman
though stricken with sorrow?"

3 Lord of men (replied Vaiśampāyana),
listen to the story
of how your great-grandfathers lived
in disguise in Virāṭa's city.

4 After receiving Dharma's boon,
the dharma-abiding Pāṇḍavas
returned to the āshram and described
to the Brahmins what happened.

5 After they finished, Yudhiṣṭhira handed
to the Brahmins
the *araṇī*-fire-stick and drilling-rod
that he had lost.

6 The mahā-minded son of Dharma,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
summoned his brothers
and said to them:

7 "We have spent twelve years exiled
from our kingdom,
and come to the very difficult
thirteenth year.

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8 Kaunteya-Arjuna, let us decide to go
to a suitable place
and pass this year undiscovered
by our enemies."

9 "Lord of men," replied Arjuna,
"Dharma's boon
will enable us to live undetected.
I am sure of this.

10. Regarding where we should stay,
I can think
of the following charming, little-known places.
Select one.

11. Surrounding the kingdom of the Kurus
are lovely corn-rich lands:
Pāñcāla, Cedi, Matsya, Śūrasena,
and Paṭaccara:

12. Daśārṇa, Navarāṣṭra, Malla, Śālva, Yugandhara,
The vast Kuntirāṣṭra, Surāṣṭra and Avanti.

13. Which of these places
suits your fancy, O rājā,
as the right one for us to spend
our last year of exile?"

14. "O mahā-muscled one," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"the words of Bhagavan Dharma,
lord of all creatures, will come true.
There is no other way.

15. Let us put our heads together
and decide
on a pleasant, auspicious place
where we can stay happily and without fear.

16. The king of Matsya, Virāṭa,
is elderly and dharma-inclined;
he is powerful, benevolent,
and friendly towards us Pāṇḍavas.

17. So, *tāta*, dear Arjuna, let us decide
to pass this whole year
in the capital of Virāṭa,
working for him in different ways.

18. Enhancers of Kaurava glory,
tell me how we should present ourselves
after we have set foot
in the kingdom of Virāṭa the Matsya-ruler."

19. "O god-among-men," said Arjuna,
"let us start with you –
what disguise will you assume
in the city of Virāṭa?

20. O rājā! You are soft-spoken, charitable, humble,
you are a truthful man of dharma
struck by misfortune.
What will be your role?

21. O rājā! A king is no ordinary man –
he does not know hardships.
How will you, a king,
overcome this suffering in store for us?"

22. "Enhancers of Kaurava glory, bull-brave heroes,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"let me explain what I will do
in the city of rājā Virāṭa.

23. I will become a Brahmin;
my name will be Kaṅka
the expert gambler; I will become
the mahātmā rājā's courtier.

24. I will play with red and black dice,
and move
ivory, blue, yellow, red and white pawns
on the table.

25. I will delight the king,
his friends and ministers.
None will succeed in seeing through
my disguise as Kaṅka.

26 If the king questions me,
my reply will be:
'I used to be Yudhiṣṭhira's friend,
as dear to him as life.'

27 That is my plan of spending
a year in Virāṭa.
Wolf-waisted Voṛkodara-Bhīma,
what do you have in mind? Tell me."

SECTION TWO

1 "O descendant of Bharata," said Bhīma,
"I will be the kitchen cook of rājā Virāṭa;
my name Ballava.
That is my plan.

2 I am skilled in the arts of the kitchen.
I shall make broths and curries.
The cooks
who prepared his dishes –

3 I will excel them in every way.
More than that –
I will carry the heaviest loads of wood
with pleasure.

4 The rājā cannot refuse to appoint me
when he sees
the special services that I willingly render
at all times.

5 The palace servants will treat me
like a second rājā
when they see my work,
I will be lord of food and drink.

6 If I am ordered to tame
mahā-powerful elephants and bulls,
I will gladly do that service too,
O rājā.

7 If anyone dares challenge me
to a wrestling bout,
I will defeat him
and exalt the glory of the king.

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8 I will never, however,
take the life of any challenger;
I will humble him,
but never strike him down fatally.

9 If questioned, I will reply:
'I used to be cook,
curry-maker, animal-tamer, and wrestler
to king Yudhiṣṭhira.'

10 O lord of the earth, I promise this –
whatever I do,
however I behave,
I shall take good care of myself."

11 "To whom, seated with Dāśārha-Krishna,"
Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Agni the fire-god,
bent on devouring the Khāṇḍava-forest,
appeared as a Brahmin –

12 Kuntī's son, mahā-powerful, mahā-muscled,
invincible Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the joy of the Kaurava dynasty,
what is his plan?

13 The slayer of Pannagas and rākṣasas,
the single-chariot-rider who routed Indra,
the gratifier of the forest-devouring fire-god
Pāvaka-Agni,

14 Who carried away the sister of Vāsuki
the serpent-rājā,
the most excellent of warriors –
what is Arjuna's plan?

15 The sun is the greatest of heat-giving bodies,
The Brahmin the greatest of two-legged creatures,
The cobra the greatest of slithering snakes,
Fire the greatest of radiant substances.

16 The thunderbolt is the greatest of weapons,
The humped bull greatest of bovine creatures,
The ocean is greatest among expanses of water,
Rain-clouds greatest among vapour-congregations,

17 Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the greatest of the Nāgas,
Airāvata the greatest among elephants,
The son is the greatest of loved ones,
The wife is the greatest of friends,

18 Meru is the greatest of mountains,
Madhusūdana-Krishna the greatest of gods,
The moon is the greatest of planets,
Mānasarovara the greatest of lakes;

19 As each of these is greatest among its kind,
O wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
young Guḍākeśa-Arjuna is the greatest
among wielders of the bow.

20 What will be the role of the dreadful-deed-doer
mahā-radiant Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
who wields the Gāṇḍīva,
whose chariot is pulled by white horses,
whose greatness is equal to that
of Indra and Vāsudeva-Krishna?

21 Arjuna lived for five years
in the realm
of the radiant thousand-eyed Sahasrākṣa-Indra,
and in that period
acquired single handed unique proficiency
in divine weapons.

22 I think of him as the tenth Rudra,
the thirteenth Āditya,
the ninth Vasu, the tenth Graha;
such is his greatness.

23 His long arms are symmetrically strong,
their skin made knobby
like the humps of bulls
by repeated backlash of the bowstring.

24 I believe that as the Himālaya is among mountains,
the sea among rivers,
fire among the Vasus,
Śakra-Indra among the gods,

25 The tiger among animals,
and Garuḍa among winged creatures,
so is Arjuna among mail-clad warriors.
What is his plan?"

26 "Ruler of the earth," replied Arjuna,
"I will be a eunuch, a neuter-sexed one.
It is difficult
to hide bowstring scars,

27 But I will wear bangles
and conceal the cicatrices on my arms.
I will wear fire-bright rings
in my ears,

28 Conch bangles on my wrists;
I will be the third sex,
do my hair in braids,
and call myself Bṛhannalā, O rājā.

29 In my girl-guise,
I will excel in repeatedly chanting
the chronicles of kings
to ladies in the inner apartments.

30 I shall tutor the ladies of Virāṭa
in singing and all variety of dancing
and musical instruments of all kinds,
O rājā.

31 I will recite stories
of inspiring human deeds and customs,
and I will have no difficulty
in concealing my identity.

32 If the rājā questions me, I will say:
'I was employed
as Draupadī's waiting-maid
in the palace of Yudhiṣṭhira.'

33 And so, O Indra-among-rājās,
using this means to hide myself,
as fire is hid in ashes,
I will enjoy my days in Virāṭa's palace."

[IV:2:34; 3:1-7]

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34 Saying this, Arjuna, finest of men
and best of dharma-followers, stopped.
Yudhiṣṭhira turned
to the next brother.

SECTION THREE

1 "Gentle, brave, pleasure-accustomed Nakula,"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira, "*tāta*, dear one,
graceful brother, what will you do
in Virāṭa's kingdom?"

2 "I will become keeper of the king's horses,"
Nakula replied.
"I know all about horses,
I have experience in handling them.

3 I will call myself Granthika.
I love horse-tending.
I am skilled in their training.
O Kaurava rājā,
you know horses are as dear to me
as they are to you.

4 If people in the city of Virāṭa
question me
about my profession,
I will give them this reply:

5 'The Pāṇḍava king Yudhiṣṭhira
placed me in charge of his horses.'
None will pierce my disguise
in Virāṭa's city."

6 "Sahadeva," Yudhiṣṭhira asked, "tell me:
what guise will you adopt,
what work will you do
to remain undetected?"

7 "I will keep audit of his cows," replied Sahadeva.
"Lord of the earth,
I am skilled in taming, milking,
and keeping count of cows.

8 I will call myself Tantipāla;
I will work well,
and remain undetected.
Do not worry on that count.

9 So long as I work for Virāṭa,
his cows will flourish,
they will be disease-free,
they will multiply,
they will supply plentiful milk,
and bring prosperity to all.

10 Cow-thieves will not be able to steal them,
they will not fear tigers
and other predators.
They will be contented and numerous.

11 It was I who supervised your cows,
O world-ruling brother!
I know all that is involved
in the business of cow-keeping.

12 The nature of cows, their characteristics,
the auspicious signs on cows
and other cow-matters
are perfectly in my grasp.

13 O rājā! I even know about bulls
with auspicious marks
smelling whose urine is said
to make a barren woman conceive.

14 I love doing this work,
and my days will pass happily.
No one will see through my disguise,
and I will please the king."

15 "Our beloved wife is dearer to us
than our very lives,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira. "She deserves the honour
a mother deserves,
she deserves the pūjā-respect one gives
to an elder sister.

16 She is not familiar with domestic work,
as other women are.
What will be the disguise
of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī?

17 She is young and gentle, this greatly-renowned
mahā-fortune-favoured princess,
devoted to her husbands.
How will she ever manage?

18 This lovely lady has known
only garlands and perfumes
and ornaments and expensive dresses
from the day of her birth."

19 "Descendant of Bharata," replied Draupadī,
"women known as *sairandhrīs*
work in households.
Respectable ladies shun such work.

20 I will become a *sairandhrī,*
skilled in hair-dressing.
If the king questions me, I will say,
'I used to be maid to Draupadī
in the palace
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

21 This will safeguard my disguise.
I will be maid
to the rājā's wife Sudeṣṇā,
Do not be anxious."

22 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "You speak sweetly,
my lovely wife, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī!
You were born noble, you are innocent,
free from impure thoughts.

23 Auspicious lady, let your behaviour
always be such
that no wicked and ill-motived men
ever find it pleasurable."

SECTION FOUR

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "You have explained clearly
your plans of disguise.
I have indicated my plan to you.
Let it be so then.

2 Our *purohita* will return
to the palace of Drupada
with our charioteers and cooks,
and preserve the sacred *agnihotṛ* fires.

3 Indrasena and all our followers
will hurry back
with empty chariots to Dvāravatī.
I want this done.

4 All the maids waiting on Draupadī
will go to the land of the Pāñcālas
along with the cooks
and kitchen supervisors.

5 All of them will say:
'We know nothing about the Pāṇḍavas.
The Pāṇḍavas have abandoned Dvaitavana
and left us behind'."

6 After consulting each other (said Vaiśampāyana)
they sought Dhaumya's suggestions
about what their plan should be,
and he gave them this advice:

7 "Pāṇḍavas, you have agreed on plans
about the Brahmins,
friends, and weapons;
and also arranged about the *agnihotṛ*.

8 Take special care of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
You know how men are,
you know how most men behave.
All this is known to you.

9 Well-wishers should nevertheless advise you
on the eternal truths
of Dharma, Kāma, and Artha.
Listen, therefore, to my words,

10 Which are spoken for your welfare.
Let me tell you,
O sons of kings, what it means
to live in a palace.

11 Such living is beset with problems;
I will show you
how to overcome them,
because you are men of character.

12 Honoured or not, you must be firm
and spend the year of exile undetected.
The fourteenth year
will be one of joy.

13 A rājā is one who protects and guards
his subjects:
he is a god in human form,
a weapons-ringed conflagration.

14 Seek permission before meeting him.
Never put faith in so-called royal secrets.
Choose to sit on a seat
that none else desires.

15 Never think you are the favourite.
Never use his chariot,
couch, seat, bed, elephant,
or seek similar advantages.

16 Only he can survive in a palace
who, reclining on a royal seat,
does not excite
suspicious speculations.

17 Never supply unasked advice to the rājā.
Remember always
to pay him silent and timely deference
and pūjā-respect.

18 Rājās are contemptuous of liars.
They distrust gossip,
and order public ridicule
of double-dealing courtiers.

19 A wise man avoids friendship
with the wife of a king,
with women in the inner apartments,
with women who are disliked by the king,
and women who are hostile
to the king.

20 Do if you like the most trivial act –
but always with the king's knowledge.
This is the way to safeguard oneself
in a rājā's palace.

21 Until asked or ordered, one should consider oneself
like one born blind,
no matter how high the royal office
one holds.

22 If their dignity is not honoured,
foe-crushing kings care neither
for their sons and grandsons,
nor even their own brothers.

23 Consider a king to be Agni,
the fire god himself, or any other god,
One thing is sure:
deception invites death.

24 Suppress your anger and pride,
and give up negligence,
and follow implicitly the policy
dictated by the king.

25 Think out matters carefully;
then speak to the king
what is both pleasing and profitable to him.
Prefer the profitable to the pleasant.

26 Think always of the best interests
of the king;
never speak to him anything
that is both unpleasant and unprofitable.

27 Wisely tell yourself, *He does not like me,*
and faithfully serve him.
Do only such service as is both
pleasing and profitable.

28 Remember your place,
and you will prosper in the palace.
Never seek to harm the rājā,
nor be friendly with his ill-wishers.

29 A paṇḍit sits on the king's right
or on his left;
behind are the guards;
and sitting in front is forbidden.

30 Let none press his own case
when the king is attending
to official matters; this is impudence
even when favourites do it.

31 Even the poor would consider such an action
as condemnable.
Let no one leak out a lie
that the rājā has spoken.

32 The rājā has only contempt
for the reporters of his lies,
even as he has contempt
for his over-intelligent courtiers.

33 A man who does not think,
I am brave, I am clever,
and follows royal wishes,
soon finds himself well-rewarded.

34 If a person is rewarded lavishly by the rājā,
he should devote himself to such service
as is pleasant and profitable
for the rājā.

35 How can a man be considered
worthy of respect by the wise
if he invites royal wrath by failing to please
the lavish fruit-provider?

36 Do not move your lips, arms and legs
in the royal presence;
always speak softly, cough gently,
and fart noiselessly.

37 Never break out into loud laughter
like that of a madman
if something funny or ridiculous
happens in a king's presence.

38 Do not be completely serious either,
and unexpressive.
Give a quiet smile, to show only
a light interest.

39 The cautious and alert person
who is neither
exhilarated by reward nor depressed by disgrace,
is fit for palace-life.

40 A paṇḍit-like courtier
who has just the proper words
for rājā and princes
will enjoy a long term as palace-favourite.

41 Even if disgraced for whatever reason,
a palace counsellor
who refrains from criticising the rājā
will soon regain favour.

42 A rājā's subject,
whose livelihood depends on royal favour,
must praise him in his presence
and also in his absence.

43 If a courtier persistently continues
to further his own ends,
he will be discredited
and may even stand to lose his life.

44 Play safe and never contradict the rājā;
if you must provide advice,
however well-meant,
choose the right time and place.

45 The cheerful, strong, brave, truth-speaking,
gentle and self-disciplined man,
faithful to the rājā like a shadow,
is fit for palace-life.

46 Fit for palace-life also is the man
who steps forward saying,
'Command me too, sire,' when another man
is entrusted with a task.

47 Fit for palace-life is the man
who is not afraid
to carry out royal orders within the kingdom
or outside its borders.

48 Fit for palace-life is the man who,
away from his home,
forgets his loved ones, and suffers,
investing in future happiness.

49 Do not dress like the rājā,
do not guffaw in his presence,
do not reveal royal secrets,
This is the secret of success.

50 Do not take bribes
when entrusted with a royal commission,
for that is the surest way to prison
and perhaps to death.

51 Make use only of the chariots, robes,
and ornaments provided by the rājā.
This is calculated
to earn the royal favour.

52 Sons of Pāṇḍu, control your minds
with great effort,
and pass this year, my children, *tāta*,
with exemplary behaviour."

53 "You have given us excellent advice,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira. "May you prosper!
Only our mother Kuntī and Vidura
could have advised so well.

54 Let us now make plans for our departure,
which will end our sorrows
and give us final victory
over our foes."

55 O best of the twice-born (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Dhaumya, following Yudhiṣṭhira's instructions,
made all the arrangements
for their departure.

56 Lighting the sacred fire, he chanted mantras
and offered oblations
for their prosperity and success
and conquest of the whole earth.

57 After circling in *pradakṣiṇa* the sacred fire
and the tapasyā-rich Brahmins,
the six, with Yājñasenī-Draupadī leading,
set out on their mission.

58 After the heroes had left, Dhaumya,
finest of *japa*-meditating ascetics,
collected the *agnihotṛ* materials
and went to Pāñcāla.

59 Indrasena and others had left earlier
for the land of the Yādavas.
They passed their days happily,
looking after the Pāṇḍava horses and chariots.

SECTION FIVE

1 Carrying swords and other weapons,
and wearing iguana-leather finger-protectors,
equipped with quivers and other weapons,
the heroes proceeded towards the Kālindī-Yamunā.

2 Eager to regain their kingdom,
they ended their forest-stay,
and trekked to the southern bank
of the river Yamunā.

3 Living on deer they hunted in hills and forests,
the mahā-powerful heroes moved on,
leaving behind Pāñcāla in the south,
and Daśārṇa in the north,

4 They passed through Yakṛlloma and Śūrasena;
in course of time
the Pāṇḍavas entered
the kingdom of Matsya.

5 They had swords strapped to their waists;
they were bearded,
and they looked tired;
they gave out they were hunters.
Arriving in that kingdom,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī said to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

6 "Look, there are trails here, and fields.
The capital of Virāṭa
cannot be far away.
I am so exhausted.
Let us spend the night here,
I cannot go further."

7 "Dhanañjaya-Arjuna," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"pick up Draupadī, O Bharata descendant,
and carry her. We have left the forest
and come to the city."

8 Arjuna, like the leader of an elephant herd,
picked up Draupadī;
when they reached the city's outskirts,
he put her down.

9 Near the capital
Yudhiṣṭhira said to Arjuna:
"Where should we conceal our weapons
before entering the city?

10 To enter the city with our weapons
would alarm the citizens.
I am certain this will happen,
tāta, dear brother.

11 Your massive bow, for example, the Gāṇḍīva,
is world-famous.
If we enter with our weapons,
we will soon be recognised.

12 And if any one of us is detected,
remember the agreement –
we must undergo forest-exile
for another twelve years."

13 "O Indra-among-men," answered Arjuna,
"near the funeral ground,
on a hill, is a huge, hard-to-climb,
large-branched *śamī*-tree.

14 There is no one around
who can see us concealing
our weapons in that tree,
O Pāṇḍava.

15 The tree is far from the road.
It's near a dreary
and deserted funeral ground;
it's in a snake-and-beast-filled forest.

16 Let us hide our weapons in that tree,
O Bharata descendant,
and go the city and live
as we have planned."

17 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Saying this to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Arjuna prepared to conceal the weapons.

18 The bow that could destroy hosts of enemies,
bull-brave Kaurava Arjuna's bow
which defeated gods, men, and nations
when aimed from a chariot –

19 The massive and magnificent Gāṇḍīva –
the mahā-terrifyingly-twanging bow –
Pārtha-Arjuna now picked it up
and loosened the bowstring.

20 Brave foe-punishing Yudhiṣṭhira
loosened the unbreakable string
of his bow with which
he protected Kurukṣetra.

21 The bow with which mighty Bhīma
had conquered Pāñcāla,
the bow with which he singly routed
innumerable enemies,

22 The bow with which he spread far
his conquests,
the bow whose twang was the noise
of a splitting mountain,

23 The bow with which he defeated
the Sindhu-rājā Jayadratha –
Bhīma picked up that bow
and loosened the bowstring.

24 Pāṇḍu's brave son by Mādrī,
the mahā-muscled
copper-skinned, little-speaking,
conquering hero,

25 Named Nakula the "Unfamiliar"
because of his incomparable handsomeness
in the Pāṇḍava family,
lifted his bow and loosened the bowstring.

26 Brave Sahadeva, the noble subduer
of the territories
in the southern region,
lifted his bow and unstrung it.

27 Together with their bows, they concealed
their long mahā-expensive swords,
their precious quivers,
and arrows with razor-sharp tips.

28 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira ordered Nakula:
"Heroic brother,
climb this *śamī* tree
and conceal these bows in it."

29 Nakula climbed the *śamī* tree
and hid the bows and weapons
in those hollows that appeared ideal
for the purpose.

30 He selected the boughs
that would survive heavy storms,
and tied the weapons securely to them
with strong ropes.

31 The Pāṇḍavas hung a corpse
from the *śamī* tree so that the foul smell
would make people mutter,
"Must be a corpse,"
and keep them from approaching too near
the *śamī* tree.

32 After tying the corpse, they said:
"This is our mother;
she died one hundred and eighty years old.
We hang her body here
in accordance with the family dharma
of our forefathers."

33 They announced this to the cowherds
and shepherds,
after which the foe-crushing Pāṇḍavas
went to the capital.

34 Yudhiṣṭhira selected the following code names
for himself and his brothers:
Jaya, Jayanta, Vijaya,
Jayatsena, Jayadbala.

35 Keeping to their word to pass
their thirteenth year of exile undetected,
they entered
the mahā-capital of Virāṭa.

SECTION SIX

1 On their way to enchanting Virāṭa city
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Yudhiṣṭhira mentally hymned Durgā-Devī,
Tribhuvaneśvarī goddess of the three worlds:

[IV:6:2-8]

Transcreated by P. Lal

2 *Born of the womb of Yaśodā,*
dearly beloved of Nārāyaṇa,
born in the family of Nandagopa,
enhancer of filial prosperity,

3 *Terror of Kaṁsa, slayer of anti-gods,*
goddess resurrected in the sky
when dashed against
a slab of stone,

4 *Sister of Vāsudeva-Krishna,*
divinely-garlanded, divinely-robed devī,
lady with sword and scimitar
for the redemption of devotees

5 *Who are sunk in ill-doing*
like a cow in a swamp,
and seek release at the hands
of the goddess of blessings!

6 Eager for darshan of the devī,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
invoked her with these chants
sung in her praise:

7 "Granter of boons! Varade!
Equal of Krishna!
Virginal goddess! Kumārī!
Brahmacāriṇī!
Bright-bodied like the dawn!
Lovely moon-faced goddess!
I offer you homage! *Namo-astu*!

8 Four-handed goddess!
Four-faced goddess!
Round-hipped goddess!
Full-breasted goddess!
Wearer of peacock-blue bangles!
Wearer of sapphire armlets!
You are radiant like Padmā, O devi!
Padmā-consort of Nārāyaṇa!

9 Goddess supreme of the sky,
Gaganeśvarī Devī!
Your form is radiant
As your brahmacarya is radiant!
Blue-dark beauty,
Dark-blue like Krishna!
O Saṁkarṣaṇa-faced goddess!

10 Two long arms upraised
Like poles to honour Śakra-Indra!
In the other arms:
A vessel, a lotus, a bell,

11 A noose, a bow, a mahā-cakra!
These are your various weapons.
Lady with lovely ears
Made radiant with excellent ear-rings!

12 Lovelier than the moon
Is your face, O devī!
Magnificent diadem,
Exquisite hair done in a braid!

13 Braided hair gliding
Down your body like a snake!
A girdle round your waist,
Like snake-girdled Mandara-mountain;

14 Peacock-plumes like a flag
Shining on your head!
Radiantly beautiful goddess!
Virginal goddess!
Purifier of the three worlds!

15 No wonder the gods sing your praises,
And offer you pūjā!
You slew the buffalo anti-god
And saved the three worlds!
Be gracious to me, O goddess who excels!
Shower on me your mercy!

16 You are Jaya!
You are Vijaya!
You the granter of victory in battle!
Grant me victory, devī!
Grant me a boon in my distress!

[IV:6:17-23]

Transcreated by P. Lal

17 Kālī!
Kālī!
Mahākālī!
Dweller on the Vindhyas,
Eternal mountains!
Wielder of the sacrificial scimitar
And the *khaṭva*-axe!

18 You grant boons to your devotees!
You go where you please! Kāmacāriṇī!
You whom the sorrow-stricken always remember!

19 Nothing is impossible for those
Who supplicate before you,
Who offer you *pranāma* at dawn!

20 Durgā!
Durga the Faraway One
Because you remove the sorrows of devotees!
Durgā the one who rescues!
You are the saviour of the lost in the forest,
You are the saviour of the drowned in the ocean!

21 You are the refuge of the robbed and the beaten!
O Final Redeemer!
You are the hope and the succour
Of all who cross ocean and forest and plain.

22 Mahā-devi!
You are the saviour of those who remember you!
You are Fame.
You are Śrī the goddess of prosperity,
You are Strength,
You are Success,
You are Modesty,
You are Knowledge,
You are Offspring,
You are Intellect!

23 You are Saṁdhyā,
You are Night,
You are Dawn,
You are Sleep,
You are Moonlight,

You are Loveliness,
You are Forgiveness,
You are Mercy!
You break the grief
Of loss of sons and loss of wealth,

24 Of disease and death and fear,
If you are offered pūjā.
Deprived of my kingdom,
I have come for your blessings.

25 Devī!
Goddess above all gods!
Sureśvarī!
I bow my head at your feet.
Lotus-leaf-eyed lady,
I love the Truth,
Show me the Truth!

26 Durgā!
Refuge of all! Grant me refuge!
Benevolent to bhaktas!
Merciful one,
Grant me your grace!"
Praised in this way,
Durga-devī gave darshan to the Pāṇḍava.

27 She appeared before the rājā
and she said to him:
"O mahā-muscled rājā!
Listen to my words.

28 You will soon be victorious
on the battlefield.
My grace will help you destroy
the Kaurava forces.

29 The kingdom will be rid of thorns
and you will be free to enjoy it again.
You and your brothers
will again prosper, O rājā.

30 My grace will bring you health
and happiness.
When I am praised,
I remove sorrows, and offer

[IV:6:31-35; 7:1-2]

Transcreated by P. Lal

31 Kingdom, long life, health and progeny
to the pure in mind
who sing my glory to the world.
In towns, in battles, foe-beset,

32 In forts, in forests, in deserts,
seas or mountains,
in exile, I will offer refuge, O rājā,
to anyone who remembers

33 My glory as you have done today.
Nothing will be beyond
the person who listens to
or chants this hymn.

34 Sons of Pāṇḍu! It brings achievement
to anyone who respects it.
My grace will prevent the Kauravas
and the Virāṭa-citizens

35 From recognising you when you hide
in the capital."
Saying this to foe-suppressing Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Devī offered her benediction
to the sons of Pāṇḍu,
and disappeared.

SECTION SEVEN

1 Arriving near the holy,
auspicious and enchanting,
three-worlds-flowing Jāhnavī-Gaṅgā
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the Pāṇḍavas paid homage
to gods, ṛṣis and pitṛs.

2 Remembering the boon,
Yudhiṣṭhira collected
the *agnihotṛ* materials,
and set out eastwards,
doing *añjali* in his mind
and invoking Dharma.

3 "My father is Prajāpati Dharma,
the boon-granting deity.
Afflicted with thirst,
I sent out my brothers
to a nearby lake
to fetch me some water.

4 Disguised as a yakṣa
in the lake, my father
paralysed my brothers,
as Indra does anti-gods
by hurling his thunderbolt.
I managed to please him.

5 Then Bhagavan Dharma
embraced me lovingly,
and affectionately said,
'Look at me, Pāṇḍava,
high in the sky,
and ask any boon.'

6 Looking at my father,
I said, 'Lord, *Prabhu*,
I am firm in dharma,
Restore my brothers
to life, and make them
exactly as they were.

7 May we be forgiving,
may we be truthful,
may men honour us.
This is all I ask.'
My boon was granted,
Dharma's words fulfilled."

8 Yudhiṣṭhira thought in this way
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and, by Dharma's grace,
the Pāṇḍavas donned their disguises.

9 Yudhiṣṭhira was transformed
into a young Brahmin
triple-staffed and turbaned,
kuśa-grass in hand,
wearing a saffron robe,
stepping cautiously forward.

[IV:7:10-15]

10 That is how the faithful
followers of Dharma,
the Pāṇḍavas, changed also.
Suddenly they appeared
in the robes and ornaments
suited to their roles.

11 Wrapping his dice
of gold set in sapphires,
and tucking the bundle
under his armpit,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira arrived
at the palace of Virāṭa.

12 Lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira,
glorious Yudhiṣṭhira,
mahā-glorious Kaurava,
respected by rājās,
as unapproachable
as a venomous serpent,

13 Handsome and bull-brave,
equal to a god,
bright sun in clouds,
bright fire in ashes,
came to the palace
and stood before Virāṭa.

14 Virāṭa glimpsed the Pāṇḍava
like the moon among clouds,
and then, suddenly,
he was there! – with a face
like the full moon
blinding with brilliance.

15 Virāṭa asked his Brahmins,
advisers and Vaiśyas,
charioteers and others,
"Who is that man
leading the group,
who comes like a king?

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16 He cannot be a Brahmin.
He is a lord of the earth.
Yet he comes without servants,
he has no chariot,
nor even an elephant.
Yet he dazzles like Indra.

17 From the signs on his body
I am sure he is one
who has passed through the ritual
of lustral coronation.
He approaches me
like a rutting elephant a lotus."

18 Bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira
approached king Virāṭa
who had these thoughts
and said, "O emperor!
I am a Brahmin,
I wish to serve you.

19 I will follow you like one
who follows a master.
Command me, my lord."
Pleased, the rājā welcomed him,
saying, "Whatever the post
you desire, is yours."

20 After appointing him,
Virāṭa said affectionately
to the lion-among-men,
"Who is the rājā
you served before coming
to my kingdom, O Brahmin?

21 And what is your name?
Your family? Your *gotra*?
What skills do you know?"

22 "My name is Kaṅka,"
Yudhiṣṭhira replied,
"I am a Brahmin,
my family Vaiyāghrapada,
I am expert at dice,
and a *sakhā*-friend of Yudhiṣṭhira."

[IV:7:23-28]

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23 "Ask a boon," said Virāṭa;
"rule the Matsyas if you wish.
I will take your advice.
I like skilled gamblers.
You resemble a god,
you deserve a kingdom."

24 "My first wish," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"is this – I want no quarrels
with low-class types.
Also, whoever I defeat at dice
must part with his wealth.
Grant me this, O lord of the world."

25 "I will order him killed
who harms you," said Virāṭa.
"If Brahmin, I'll banish him.
Let all here listen!
Kaṅka and I are equal lords
of the kingdom!

26 Be my friend, Kaṅka,
make use of my chariot,
my robes, and refreshments.
Attend to my affairs.
The doors of my kingdom
are open to you.

27 You will be the person
to listen to the pleas
of employment-seekers.
Your intercession
will grant their desires.
Fear nothing in my palace."

28 This is how Yudhiṣṭhira
met rājā Virāṭa
(said Vaiśampāyana).
The meeting resembled
the friendship of Viṣṇu
and thunder-wielding Indra.

29 The sight of Yudhiṣṭhira
so pleased Virāṭa
that, when Yudhiṣṭhira relaxed,
Virāṭa kept gazing
and gazing at his guest
who resembled Śakra-Indra.

30 And Yudhiṣṭhira was pleased
with the promise of Virāṭa.
Respected by all,
bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira
lived undetected
in the land of Virāṭa.

SECTION EIGHT

1 Next came magnificent,
lion-gaited Bhīma,
strong and refulgent –
in his hands were a ladle,
a spoon, and a spotless
naked-blue sword.

2 He was dressed in the dark
robes of a cook.
Lion-strong, mountain-firm,
he stood before Virāṭa,
his radiance as scorching
as that of the sun.

3 He stood like a rājā
in front of Virāṭa.
Virāṭa asked his courtiers:
"Who is this handsome,
lion-shouldered man,
this bull-brave mortal?

4 I seem to recall
this sun-dazzling man,
though I cannot say where.
I cannot fathom
the reason for the coming
of this bull-brave mortal.

5 No point speculating
if he is Puraṁdara-Indra,
or the gandharva rājā.
Find out who stands
in front of our eyes,
and grant him his wishes."

6 Ordered by Virāṭa,
swift deputies approached
Kuntī's son Bhīma,
and repeated to the younger
brother of Yudhiṣṭhira
the words of their rājā.

7 The mahā-minded son
of Pāṇḍu approached
Virāṭa with these words:
"O Indra-among-men!
I am a cook, Ballava.
Grant me employment."

8 "I refuse to believe,"
said Virāṭa, "that you
are a cook. You shine
like a king in prowess
and bearing – you look
like thousand-eyed Indra."

9 "Your cook and your servant,"
said Bhima. "True, I know more
than making curries
tasted and recommended
by no less a person
than king Yudhiṣṭhira.

10 O ruler of the earth,
I am a wrestler
who has no equal,
It will be my pleasure
to wrestle lions and elephants
for your entertainment."

11 "You have my permission,"
said Virāṭa. "Be chief
of the royal kitchens,
though you deserve better.
You deserve the entire
sea-circled earth.

12 I have granted your wish
to be lord of my kitchens.
I appoint you the head
of all who were previously
appointed by me
to supervise my kitchens."

13 As chief of the kitchens,
Bhīma soon became
the favourite of Virāṭa.
Neither palace servants
nor the king's subjects
saw through his disguise.

SECTION NINE

1 Next was Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī –
sweet-smiling, black-eyed lady.
She braided her long, glossy hair and concealed it
under her right shoulder's drape.

2 She put on the drab, dirty-looking dress
of a *sairandhrī*,
and began wandering aimlessly,
pretending to be in great distress.

3 Men and women in the streets
gathered round her, asking:
"Who are you? What do you want?
What is the matter?"

4 "I am a *sairandhrī*," she said,
"I will work for anyone
who wants me."
Impressed by her beauty and sweetness,

5 They could not believe
she was a mere maidservant
looking for employment
to earn a livelihood.

6 It so happened that Virāṭa's deeply respected wife,
the Kekaya princess Sudeṣṇā,
noticed Drupada's daughter
from the palace roof.

7 Seeing her unprotected,
dressed in a single cloth,
she said to lovely Draupadī, "Gentle lady,
who are you? What do you want?"

8 O Indra-among-rājās!
Draupadī replied: "I am a *sairandhrī*.
I will serve anyone who provides me
with employment."

9 "I cannot believe what you say,"
said Sudeṣṇā.
"Lovely lady, you are meant to order
male and female servants.

10 Your heels are not too high,
your thighs touch each other.
Your intelligence and speech
are as deep as your navel.
Your nose, ears, eyes, breasts, nails and throat
are well-shaped,
Your soles, palms, eyes, lips, tongue are healthy,
your voice *haṁsa*-sweet.

11 You have lovely hair, full breasts,
you are most graceful.
Your hauches are rounded
like your lovely breasts.
You have all the characteristics
of a mare of Kāśmīra.

12 Gracefully curved are the hairs on your eyes,
your waist is slim,
Your lips are red like *bimba*-fruit,
your neck is shaped like a conch,
your veins are not visible,
your face is the full moon.

13 You are Śrī the goddess of enchantment,
your eyes are the petals
of a lotus in autumn,
your body is fragrant
like a lotus in autumn,
you are a lotus in autumn personified.

14 You cannot be a maidservant.
Who are you, lovely one?
Are you a yakṣī, a devī, a gandharvī,
or an apsarā?

15 Are you the daughter of a god
or a Nāga?
are you a city's patron goddess?
a Vidyādharī, Kinnarī, a Rohiṇī?

16 Are you Alambuṣa, Miśrakeśi,
Puṇḍarīkā, or Mālinī?
are you the consort of Indra,
Varuṇa, Viśvakarma, or Prajāpati?

17 "I am neither devī, gandharvī,
anti-goddess, nor rākṣasī.
What I tell you is true –
I am a *sairandhrī* maid.

18 I can dress hair, lovely lady,
and make excellent pastes and unguents.
With jasmines, lotuses, blue lilies
and champaks,

19 I can make an exquisite variety of garlands.
Formerly
I was employed by Satyabhāmā,
the dear wife of Krishna,

20 And by Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, wife of the Pāṇḍavas
and the loveliest ever Kaurava lady.
I serve wherever I get
good food and clothes.

21 So long as I get them,
my services are available.
Sudeṣṇā-devī,
Draupadī-devī called me Mālinī,
weaver of garlands.
I am ready today to serve you."

22 "I would place you above myself,"
replied Sudeṣṇā,
"if I did not fear the rājā
might feel passionately for you.

23 Your beauty is such that all the ladies
of the palace gaze at you spellbound.
Which man can fail
to be fascinated by you?

24 Look, even the trees in the palace
seem to be stooping
to stare at you. Which man can fail
to be fascinated by you?

25 Lovely-hipped lady, superhumanly beautiful-creature,
if rājā Virāṭa should see you,
he will desert me
and get attracted to you.

26 Large-eyed, quick-glancing lady,
should you look on a man,
he will surely
be stricken by kāma.

27 Cāruhāsinī, sweet-smiling one,
lady with a faultless figure,
any man who looks at you repeatedly
is bound to be stricken.

28 Like a person climbing a tree
for a suicidal leap
was I when I gave you shelter
in my palace.

29 Like a crab conceiving for her own destruction
am I,
O Sucismitā, sweet-smiling one –
your stay is my ruin."

30 Draupadī replied: "O lovely lady,
I have five young husbands, all gandharvas –
neither Virāṭa nor any other man
can hope to have me.

31 They are all sons
of a mahā-powerful gandharva rājā.
They have sworn to protect me.
Besides, I am myself strong-willed.

32 My gandharva husbands desire I should serve
only persons who want me
neither to wash their feet nor offer me food
defiled by another's touch.

33 The man who tries to have me
as he would any other woman,
will be made to enter another body
that very night.

34 No one will force me away from goodness.
My beloved gandharva husbands
are presently in difficulties,
but they are stronger than I,

35 And they have sworn to protect me at all times,
O sweet-smiling lady."
"If this is so, then be my joy," replied Sudeṣṇā,
"and stay with me.

36 You will not have to wash anyone's feet,
nor eat polluted food."
Assured by Virāṭa's wife (said Vaiśampāyana),
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,

37 Dharma-devoted to her husbands, spotless lady,
stayed in that city.
No one, O Janamejaya,
could pierce through her disguise.

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SECTION TEN

1 Dressed as a cowherd,
and speaking as a cowherd does,
Sahadeva came to the city of Virāṭa.
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 The rājā saw him standing
in the grazing grounds near the palace;
impressed, he ordered Sahadeva
brought to the palace.

3 Seeing that bull-brave hero appear
before him in dazzling splendour,
the rājā questioned
the Kaurava descendant:

4 "Whose son are you? Where do you come from,
and what do you want?
I have not seen you before.
Tell me all, bull-brave hero."

5 Sahadeva the foe-crusher
replied in a cloud-
reverberating voice:
"I am a Vaiśya, O rājā,
may name Ariṣṭanemi,
cow-keeper of the bull-brave Kauravas.

6 O rājā, not knowing the whereabouts
of the lion-like Pāṇḍavas,
I wish to serve you.
I cannot live
without serving, and I
will serve only you."

7 "Radiant as a foe-crushing lord
of the sea-girt earth,"
said Virāṭa,
"you must be Brahmin or Kṣatriya.
Tell me the truth.
You do not look Vaiśya.

8 Where did you serve –
which king, which kingdom?
What are your skills?
How do you plan
to live in my kingdom?
How much do you want?"

9 "Yudhiṣṭhira is the eldest
of the five Pāṇḍava brothers.
He had eight hundred and ten thousand cows
of one kind,

10 And a hundred thousand of another;
two hundred thousand of a third.
I was his cow-supervisor;
they called me Tantipāla.

11 I know everything about cows
within a ten-*yojana* radius:
their past, present, and future –
their whole story.

12 Rājā-of-the Kurus Yudhiṣṭhira
knew about my skill in this field:
that mahātmā king
was pleased with me.

13 I know the techniques
to make cows breed
profusely and quickly;
I know the methods
to make them immune
to infectious diseases.

14 O rājā! I know about bulls
born with auspicious marks;
I know how their urine
makes even barren women conceive."

15 "I own," said Virāṭa,
"a hundred thousand cows
yet uninspected.
I appoint you chief
of these cows and their keepers.
I give you their charge."

[IV:10:16; 11:1-5]

16 Best-of-men Sahadeva
lived in the palace
without being recognised
by rājā Virāṭa
or anyone else,
enjoying all the comforts.

SECTION ELEVEN

1 Vaiśampāyana said:
The next to appear
at the gates of the city
was a beautiful person
with ear-rings and bracelets
of conch set in gold.

2 Mahā-armed, the person
had the gait of an elephant,
and long, flowing tresses.
He stood in the sabhā
of Virāṭa, and the earth
trembled under him.

3 Seeing the elephant-gaited
son of Mahendra-Indra,
the foe-crushing hero,
disguised in this fashion,
rājā Virāṭa,
in the palace sabhā,

4 Said to his courtiers:
"Who is this person
I have never seen before?"
They replied that he
was a stranger to them.
The king said, surprised:

5 "You are strong like a god,
you are youthful and swarthy
like a herd-leading elephant.
You wear conch-bracelets
gold-inlaid, and ear-rings,
your hair in a braid –

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6 Yet you shine like a man
fine-haired and garlanded,
with bow, mail, and arrows,
who rides in a chariot.
Be like my sons.
Be even like me.

7 I am old and decrepit,
eager to renounce.
Take my authority
and rule over Matsya.
I cannot believe
that you are a eunuch."

8 "I am expert in hair-styles,"
said Arjuna, "I design
intricate bangles,
I give baths, I make garlands,
I polish mirrors,
I make sandalwood carvings.

9 I am an excellent tutor
in dancing and singing
to eunuchs and children
and anyone interested.
My garlands are better
than any made by girls."

10 The mahā-illustrious
rājā of Virāṭa
looked at him, astonished.
"Lion-among-lords-of-men,"
said Virāṭa, "I fail to see
how you are a eunuch.
Prabhu! Lord!
Your dress ill suits you,
it looks inauspicious.

11 The dress of a eunuch
obscures your effulgence
with as little success
as clouds hide the sun.
Only a bow
would suit your arms."

12 "I sing," replied Arjuna,
"I dance, and I play
on musical instruments.
O god among men! Appoint me
dancing instructor
to the princess Uttarā.

13 Do not press me to explain
why I am so.
I will only be pained.
I am Bṛhannalā –
a parentless son,
or a parentless daughter."

14 Virāṭa said, "Bṛhannalā,
your wish is granted –
be dancing instructor
to my daughter and her friends.
I still think you deserve
the sea-surrounded earth."

15 The rājā of the Matsyas
tested Bṛhannalā
in dancing and music;
advised by his ministers,
he had young girls test
and declare the impotence genuine.

16 Then Bṛhannalā went
to the girls' quarters.
So Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
taught Virāṭa's daughter
and her friends and maids
music and singing.

17 In no time at all
he endeared himself
to the princess and her *sakhīs*.

18 This was the way
in which Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
passed his days happily
with the girls of the palace.
And no one suspected
or saw through his role.

SECTION TWELVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Another great Pāṇḍava
approached rājā Virāṭa
hurriedly; the citizens
saw him like a sun-
maṇḍala through clouds.

2 He inspected the horses.
The rājā of the Matsyas,
observing his interest,
questioned his courtiers,
"Who is this god-like human
who approaches?

3 He looks at my horses
as if to inspect them.
He must be an expert
in horses. I think,
from the gait of this hero,
he must be a god."

4 The slayer of enemies
went up to the rājā
and said: "Lord of the earth!
May victory be yours!
I seek employment
as a trainer of horses."

5 "And well you deserve it,"
said Virāṭa. "I offer
you chariots and comforts.
But tell me who you are,
from where you have come,
what skills you have mastered."

6 "Foe-crusher," said Nakula,
"Yudhiṣṭhira is the eldest
of the five sons of Pāṇḍu.
It was my good fortune
to serve under him
as keeper of his horses.

[IV:12:7-13]

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7 I know the moods of horses
and how to tame them.
I know how to handle wild horses,
and all others too.

8 The horses in my care
never fall ill.
Why speak of horses?
Even my mares are docile.
Yudhiṣṭhira and others
called me Granthika.

9 As Mātali is to the gods,
Sumantra to Daśaratha,
the charioteer Sumaha to Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma,
I will be to you.

10 O Indra-among-rājās!
I learnt all my skills
when I worked for Yudhiṣṭhira,
who owned a thousand crore horses."

11 "From today," said Virāṭa,
"my horses are yours.
Look after them.
My charioteers and syces
from today will take
orders from you.

12 Tell me, god-like one,
what wages you desire.
My opinion, however, is
that horse-training ill suits
one who looks like a rājā.
You please me greatly.

13 You please me as much
as would Yudhiṣṭhira
if I had his darshan.
I wonder how he,
servantless, survives
the perils of the forest."

14 The youthful Pāṇḍava,
resembling a gandharva
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
pūjā-honoured by Virāṭa,
lived in the capital,
undetected by any.

15 The Pāṇḍavas, whose darshan
was always auspicious,
honoured their pledge
and lived in Matsya.
Notwithstanding their travail,
the earth-lords were content.

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 "Twice-born one," asked Janamejaya,
"what did the mahā-valiant Pāṇḍavas do,
living disguised
in the kingdom of Matsya?"

2 Let me tell you (continued Vaiśampāyana)
about the activities
of the Kuru-descendants living disguised
in the rājā's service.

3 The grace of the holy man Tṛṇabindu
and of mahātmā Dharma
enabled them to pass their days undiscovered
in Virāṭa's kingdom.

4 Yudhiṣṭhira as courtier soon became
Virāṭa's favourite,
and his son's favourite
and also of the people of Matsya.

5 He knew the secrets of dice-play
and he delighted the king with his games,
manipulating Virāṭa
like a toy-bird on a string.

6 Tiger-among-men Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
won the king's wealth
and secretly shared it
with his brothers.

7 And Bhīma sold meat and food of all kinds
which he received from Virāṭa,
and gave the money
to Yudhiṣṭhira.

8 Arjuna sold expensive cast-off garments
which he received from the women's quarters,
and divided the proceeds
among his brothers.

9 Sahadeva, now garbed in the dress
of a cowherd,
distributed curd, milk and ghee
among the Pāṇḍavas.

10 The payment he received from a satisfied monarch
for tending to the royal horses,
he distributed
among the Pāṇḍava brothers.

11 Reduced-by-tapasyā yet beautiful,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī attended
to the needs of the Pāṇḍavas
without disclosing her identity.

12 The mahā-chariot-heroes in this way
looked after each other,
living in Virāṭa's capital
as if in the womb of their mother.

13 O lord of men! Pāṇḍu's disguised sons
kept careful watch over Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
because they feared discovery
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

14 In the fourth month was a mahā-festival
in honour of Brahmā,
celebrated with pomp
by the Matsyas.

15 O rājā! For that Brahmā-festival
there poured into the capital
thousands of wrestlers,
honouring Paśupati-Śiva.

16 Mahā-bodied mahā-valiant specimens!
They resembled the Kālakhañja antigods,
these strength-intoxicated professional contestants,
these royally-respected wrestlers.

17 They had the shoulders, necks, and waists of lions;
their skins were spotlessly clean,
their chests huge;
they were seasoned veterans.

18 One among them, the most massive,
threw an open challenge,
but none dared to face him
as he strutted in the arena.

19 All the others stood bewildered and paralysed;
the rājā of the Matsyas
ordered him to wrestle
with the royal cook.

20 Ordered by the rājā, Bhīma accepted,
but reluctantly.
He did not dare disobey the king,
given the circumstances.

21 Tiger-among-men Bhīma paid his respects
to king Virāṭa
and entered the mahā-arena
with the measured gait of a lion.

22 Kuntī's son Bhīma tightened his loin-cloth
while the people applauded.
Then he called out
to the equal of Vṛtra,

23 The tremendously powerful wrestler
named Jimuta.
Both dazzled with mahā-energy
and unexcelled prowess.

24 They looked like two intoxicated
sixty-year-old bull elephants.
The lords of men
began with fierce fist-blows.

25 Each looked supremely confident,
each eager for victory.
They clashed with the force
of thunderbolts on a mountain.

26 Each looked supremely confident,
each pleased with the other's strength,
each eager for victory,
each seeking an advantage.

27 Both were grinning, both elephant-huge,
infuriated wrestlers.
They feinted with fists in various
attack-and-defence manoeuvres.

28 Each dashed, and was flung off;
each felled the other,
crushing him against the earth;
each traded blows with the other;
each swung the other screaming,
head-downward.

29 Each struck with a fist that hit
as loud as thunder;
each slapped with open palm,
fingers spread wide;
each gouged with spear-like nails;
each kicked the other.

30 Each dashed knee against knee,
head against head,
like two stones clashing.
It was a furious weaponless fight!

31 Their physical power and mental agility
delighted the spectators,
who broke into sporadic bursts
of applause
witnessing the feats
of the Vṛtra and Vāsava-Indra-like heroes,

32 Who pulled, and pressed, and swung,
and crashed against each other,
pummelling each other
with knees and feet,

33 And screaming challenge at each other,
shouting their contempt
at the top of their voices.
The bout continued,

34 With the broad-chested, long-armed,
veteran wrestlers
pounding each other with hands like iron clubs.
Slayer-of-enemies,

35 Mahā-muscled Bhīma, shouting,
seized his screaming opponent
and pulled him as a lion
pulls at an elephant.

36 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
lifted his rival and whirled him,
to the amazement
of the athletes and the audience.

37 Bhīma whirled him around
a hundred times,
and then dashed him lifeless
on the ground.

38 The magnificent wrestler Jimuta
perished instantly.
King Virāṭa and his royal friends
were overjoyed.

39 Delighted, mahā-minded Virāṭa
rewarded Ballava lavishly in the arena itself,
equalling the generosity
of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

40 After similarly humbling and slaying
many other strong challengers,
Ballava enjoyed the favours
of the Matsya-rājā.

41 And when no human was left
to offer him combat,
the king ordered him to fight lions,
tigers and elephants.

42 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
was made to fight with fierce lions
in the inner apartments
of the ladies of the palace.

43 And Pāṇḍu's son dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
delighted Virāṭa
and the ladies of the inner apartments
with his singing and dancing.

44 Nakula delighted the rājā,
by a parade of swift,
excellently-trained horses,
and was handsomely rewarded.

45 Seeing Sahadeva leading a herd
of well-tralned bullocks,
finest-of-men Virāṭa rewarded him
variously and lavishly.

46 But Draupadī was unhappy, O rājā,
seeing her mahā-chariot-hero husbands
serving others,
and often would sigh incontrollably.

47 In this way those bull-brave heroes
passed their days,
disguised in the palace of Virāṭa,
and serving him.

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 The mahā-chariot-heroes, Pṛthā's sons
spent ten months
living in this way disguised in Virāṭa
(said Vaiśampāyana).

2 Yājñasenī-Draupadī, born to be served,
O Janamajaya, O lord of the world,
suffered the most
by having to serve Sudeṣṇā.

3 But the princess of Pāñcāla
pleased princess Sudeṣṇā
and the other ladies of the palace
by her becoming behaviour.

4 One year was almost over when,
one day, mahā-powerful Kīcaka,
the general of Virāṭa's army,
happened to glimpse Draupadī.

5 She walked with the grace
of a daughter of the gods.
Kīcaka, stricken by Kāma's arrows,
began desiring her.

6 He burned in the fire of kāma.
The general of Virāṭa's army
went to his sister Sudeṣṇā
and smilingly said:

7 "I have never seen
so lovely a lady
in Virāṭa's palace.
Her beauty excites me
as subtly as does
a wine's bouquet.

8 Who is this girl
who walks with the grace
of a goddess?
Whose? From where?
I am stricken,
and she is the only cure.

9 Aho! Strange that this girl
with the grace of a goddess
should work as your maid!
She is not suited
to serve as a maid.
Let her rule my house.

[IV:14:10-17]

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10 I have chariots and elephants,
I have every luxury,
ornaments of gold,
good food and wine,
a magnificent kitchen.
Let them all be hers."

11 With Sudeṣṇā's permission,
Kīcaka approached
the daughter of Drupada,
as a jackal approaches
a lioness in a forest,
and said to her sweetly:

12 "Who are you, graceful beauty,
and whose?
How have you come to Virāṭa, lovely one?
Tell me the truth.

13 You are elegant, you are lovely.
You are gentle.
Your face shines with the lucidity
of the full moon.

14 Lovely-eyebrowed, perfect-figured one!
Cāru-sarvāṅginī!
Your eyes are large lotus petals,
your voice sweet as a koel's.

15 Lovely-hipped lady, faultless one!
Never in my life
have I come across a lady
with beauty like yours.

16 Are you lotus-enshrined Lakṣmī,
are you Prosperity embodied?
Are you Modesty? Are you Śrī?
Fame and Bewitchment? O lovely-faced one!

17 Are you the goddess of love Rati
dallying in the arms of Kāma?
O lovely-eyebrowed one,
your face mesmerises me like the moon.

18 Your face is radiant with the halo
    of the moon,
your smile is moonlight,
    your eyelashes its dark spots –

19 Who is there in the world
    who can resist the spell of kāma
once he sees your face
    of unparalleled beauty?

20 Your breasts are large and round,
    bewitchingly shaped,
with no space btween them,
    worthy of the finest garlands.

21 Lovely eye-browed, sweet-smiling one,
    Cāru-hāsinī!
Your breasts are lotuses, they inflame me
    like the whips of kāma.

22 Slim beauty, your waist can be measured
    between the fingers of one's hands;
its three folds come
    from your heavy-breasted slight stoop;

23 Your enchanting hips
    are like the banks of a river.
O lovely one, I am sorely stricken
    with the passion of kāma.

24 The fire of my passion consumes me
    like a merciless forest-blaze;
all it desires is to be one with you,
    O lovely one.

25 Beautiful-hipped lady! Quench this fire
    kindled by Manmatha the god of love
with the rain of surrender
    from the cloud of our intercourse.

26 Lady with the beauty of the moon!
    I am driven wild
by the arrows of mind-churning Manmatha,
    and the hope of intercourse with you.

27 Black-eyed beauty, the arrows have pierced me
to my innermost heart,
these irresistible arrows
of the god of love.

28 Your graceful gestures have transported me utterly
into a joyful madness.
Save me! Surrender!
Let me enjoy you.

29 O amorous one! Vilāsinī!
Wear lovely garlands and dresses and ornaments
and enjoy life with me –
fulfil all your wishes.

30 You who walk with tipsy undulations,
why live in misery here,
you who once savoured happiness?
Why not live ecstatically with me?

31 Eat food that tastes like amṛta-nectar,
enjoy life at leisure;
take your fill of the delicious drinks
available here.

32 Fortune-favoured lady,
whatever is pleasing to the palate is yours,
everything that is excellent,
expensive and superior.

33 Your beauty and youth,
O loveliest of ladies,
are utterly wasted.
Chaste and exquisitely-
beautiful lady,
put on fine garlands.

34 And I, for your sake,
will renounce my wives
and make them your maids.
Sweet-smiling beauty!
I will be your slave
and serve you for ever."

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35 "I am a *sairandhrī*," said Draupadī,
"a common hair-dresser of low caste.
You desire one unworthy of the honour,
O són of a Sūta.

36 That man is wise who desires
his own wife;
the man who desires his own wife
soon attains prosperity.

37 Let no adharma stain you,
let no desire for another's wife touch you.
Even a dead man
is saved by his wife.

38 Women of one's caste are one's helpers
in this life and the next.
They offer ritual homage
to the departed person.

39 People say their deeds are deathless,
dharma-filled, heaven-obtaining,
Born to a woman of one's caste
brings family-respect.

40 It is dharma to love one's wife.
Follow this path.
The adulterous man
never finds his own fulfilment.

41 For I am wife of others.
Leave me alone – and prosper.
Be ashamed! Follow dharma.
Learn respect for others' wives.

42 Never allow your mind
to turn towards adultery.
Superior men stay away from deeds
that should not be done.

43 The man who pursues wicked
and lustful pleasures
deludes himself and exposes himself
to fearful disgrace."

44 Lectured by the *sairandhrī* (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Kīcaka,
lust-maddened, adulterous-minded
though aware of the consequences –

45 Aware of all the perils that follow
and are denounced by all –
fatal consequences –
nonetheless said to Draupadī:

46 "Sweet-smiling beauty! I am a victim
of the god of love Manmatha,
because you are so lovely.
Do not spurn me, fair-hipped one!

47 Gentle one! I spoke to you sweetly,
under your spell –
and yet you rejected me.
Black-eyed one, you will regret this.

48 Lovely-eyebrowed one! Slim-waisted beauty!
I am lord of this kingdom,
the protector of these people.
None equals me in bravery.

49 None equals me in handsomeness,
in youth, prosperity,
and in enjoyment of luxuries –
no one on earth.

50 I have every imaginable comfort
and pleasure here.
Fortune-favoured lady,
why do you choose to be deprived?

51 Lovely lady, I will give you all my kingdom.
Large-hipped beauty,
agree to be mine,
and enjoy the world's pleasures."

52 These impure words of Kīcaka
(said Vaiśampāyana)
made pure minded Draupadī even more firm;
she said:

53 "Son of a Sūta! Don't be foolish.
Don't you realise your life is at stake?
I am protected
by five brave heroes.

54 You cannot have me.
I have five gandharvas as husbands.
They will kill you.
Don't invite your own death.

55 Why must you travel the path
that others avoid?
Why must you be the foolish boy
who stands
on one shore of the ocean,
hoping to jump to the other?

56 Run to the lowest
region of the earth,
soar to the sky,
or jump over the ocean –
you cannot escape,
the gandharvas will find you.

57 Son of a Sūta, you have insulted me today.
You, your friends, and your relatives
will suffer.
Their doom is imminent.

58 So long as the gandharvas protect me,
I am unattainable.
Because you have insulted me,
you will fall like jackfruit.

59 You do not know me –
yet are bold enough to molest me.
But try as he might,
no weak man can topple a mountain.

60 Let a man fly
to the four quarters,
or hide inside caves;
let him burrow in the earth,
do *homa* and *japa*,
jump from a hill-top,

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61 Supplicate Hutāśana-Agni;
pay homage to Āditya;
he cannot escape
if he harms another's wife.
Your protests are futile!
I am firm as a hill.

62 To seek to molest me
is like entering a massive
forest-conflagration
along with your friends
and relatives and others,
inviting your doom.

63 I conceal my beauty,
yet you desire me.
Run to the gods,
anti-gods, Nāgas, maharṣis,
rākṣasas, gandharvas –
even they cannot save you.

64 Like a dying man, Kīcaka,
waiting for the night of Kāla,
you want me today.
You fret like a baby
in his mother's lap
crying for the moon.

65 No refuge for you!
Not on earth, not in heaven!
You have lusted, O Kīcaka,
for a loved wife.
You cannot see clearly
your safety or happiness."

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 Rejected by Draupadī (said Vaiśampāyana),
and captive of kāma
that degraded his human dignity,
Kīcaka said to Sudeṣṇā:

2 "Daughter of Kekaya,
get the *sairandhrī* to accept me.
Get that graceful elephant-gaited lady
to be mine.
Sudeṣṇā, if you don't,
my passion will force me into suicide."

3 Listening to her brother suffering in this way,
and profusely lamenting,
the intelligent queen of Virāṭa,
Sudeṣṇā-devī felt sorry for him.

4 She said: "I have granted protection
to the lovely-thighed woman.
She is a good woman. I cannot do as you say.
Be noble.

5 No man can approach her evilly,
The elephant-trunk-thighed beauty told me
she has five gandharva-husbands
looking after her.

6 Her mahātmā husbands would kill him
without fail.
The rājā too was attracted to her
passionately,

7 But I succeeded in dissuading him
by warning him.
From then on he has only the highest regard
for her.

8 Afraid of the gandharvas' revenge,
the king in fact
does not so much as let even thoughts of her
touch him.

9 Those mahātmā gandharvas are as swift
as the wind-god or Garuḍa.
Roused, they destroy like fires
at the end of a yuga.

10 The *sairandhrī* has personally narrated
their mahā-feats to me.
A sister's affection makes me reveal
this secret to you.

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11 Keep this in mind, and you will never
have cause to fear.
The powerful gandharvas can destroy
your wealth and your family.

12 If you love your life,
if you love me your sister,
leave the *sairandhrī* alone.
Put aside all thoughts of her."

13 Wicked-ātmaned Kīcaka listened to his sister attentively
(said Vaiśampāyana),
and replied: "A hundred, a thousand,
even countless gandharvas –

14 I can kill them all.
Why should I be afraid of five?"
These words of Kīcaka's filled Sudeṣṇā
with deep sorrow.

15 She said to herself:
Aho! What great calamity is about to befall us!
She wept silently,
saying to herself:

16 *My deranged brother is consigning himself*
to the hell of Pātāla and the Vaḍavā-fires!
Aloud she said: "I can see you wasting
all my other brothers too.

17 Your improper desires have taken hold of you.
What can I do?
You have completely forgotten
what is good for you.

18 You have allowed yourself to become
a slave of kāma.
Your end is near. That is why kāma
grips you so strongly.

19 And you want to involve me too
in your wickedness!
The elders spoke truly when they said
the whole family pays
for the evil that is done
by one erring member.

20 I am convinced, you are as good as gone
to Dharmarāja-Yama.
And you will drag your kinsfolk too
with you.

21 And the saddest thing is that I know
what is right,
but must help my brother because I love him.
You have doomed us all."

22 Sudeṣṇā argued it out with herself –
the whole matter
of his passion and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's plight –
and said to him:

23 "Choose a festival day.
Get excellent food and wine prepared.
I will send her to you
to get some wine.

24 Find her when she is alone,
and try to persuade her
as best as you can.
You may win her with your earnestness."

25 Following the advice of his sister,
Kīcaka left
and ordered wines prepared
worthy of a rāja.

26 He also ordered various dishes readied,
along with different meat-preparations
and refreshing drinks –
all by the best cooks.

27 Having done this,
Kīcaka invited devī Sudeṣṇā to dinner.
Like a Kāla-noose-tied beast
Kīcaka

28 Had no idea he was inviting
his own death.
The absolute fool had a single obsession:
intercourse with Draupadī.

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29 "I have ordered sweet wines, Sudeṣṇā,"
Kīcaka said,
"and the finest dishes.
Now you must get the *sairandhrī* here.

30 Get her to come to me
on some pretence of work.
Fulfil my heart's one desire.
I have propitiated bull-bannered Śiva
saying, 'Lord, grant me intercourse with her,
or take my life.' "

31 Sudeṣṇā sighed deeply and said
(continued Vaiśampāyana):
"Go to your room.
I will ask her to bring wine from you."

32 Revolving thoughts of the *sairandhrī*
in his mind,
vicious Kīcaka quickly went to his dwelling
and waited for her.

33 Sudeṣṇā instructed the *sairandhrī*
to go to the mansion of Kīcaka:
"Fortune-favoured one,
go to Kīcaka's mansion,
and get some wine for me.
My throat is parched."

34 "I will not go to his mansion,"
replied Sairandhrī-Draupadī.
"Queen, you know how completely
without shame he is.

35 Lovely-limbed lady, I will not stay
like this in your palace.
I cannot allow myself to be faithless
to my husbands.

36 Lovely lady, devī,
when I agreed to serve you,
I laid down
certain conditions of service.

37 Wavy-haired lady,
lost-with-lust Kīcaka
will molest me as soon as he sees me.
I cannot go to him.

38 Queen, you have many obedient maids
serving you.
Ask one of them to go. Be noble.
He will molest me."

39 "How can he harm you if he knows
I have sent you?"
said Sudeṣṇā, and handed her
a golden vessel with a lid.

40 Sobbing, and fearful,
Draupadī left it to the gods,
and went to the mansion of Kīcaka
to fetch the wine.

41 She murmured, "I have desired none
but my husbands.
Let this truth be my protection
against the designs of Kīcaka."

42 Helpless Draupadī supplicated Sūrya
the sun-god briefly,
and Sūrya understood the plight
of the slim-waisted lady.

43 He ordered an invisible rākṣasa
to protect her.
From then on, the rākṣasa never left her alone
at any time.

44 Seeing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī approach
like a frightened doe, Kīcaka the Sūta
rose joyfully, like a man entering a boat
for life's other shore.

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 "Welcome, wavy-haired beauty," Kīcaka said.
"A lovely night for me!
Be mistress of my mansion,
be my loved one!

2 For you there will be gold necklaces,
gold earrings from different countries,
conch-shell bangles,
gems and jewels,

3 Silken dresses and soft deer-skins –
exclusively for you.
I have a divine bed readied
only for you.

4 Come, lie on it
and together let us sip honeywine."
"Fool," said Draupadī,
"no Niṣāda dare touch a Brahmin lady,
and you dare not touch me.
You will suffer for this.

5 Do not go to the hell
where adulterous enjoyers of women
crawl like slimy worms
in sweet-tasting fruit.

6 Queen Sudeṣṇā has sent me to you
to get some wine
to slake her thirst. Give it to me,
and let me go."

7 "Good woman," replied Kīcaka,
"let others take the wine to the queen."
He seized her
by her right arm.

8 "I have never," said Draupadī,
"been faithless, not even
in thought, you scoundrel.
The strength of that truth
will save me and hurl you
down on the ground."

9 Even as large-eyed
Draupadī scolded him,
Kīcaka laid hands
on her upper garment
and started to pull
as she began running.

10 Daughter-of-a-queen Draupadī
panted and struggled;
trembling, she pushed him
down on the ground;
he fell like a tree
whose roots are destroyed.

11 Pushing Kīcaka down as he attempted
to violate her,
Draupadi ran to the sabhā
to get rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's help.

12 Kīcaka clutched at her long hair
even as she ran,
and kicked her in the presence of the rājā.
She fell.

13 Instantly, the rākṣasa appointed
by the sun-god to protect her
kicked Kīcaka
with the force of a storm.

14 The impact hurled him on the ground,
and he sprawled there,
reeling, helpless,
like a root-severed tree.

15 The mahātmā rājā Virāṭa,
the elderly Brahmin counsellers,
and the Kṣatriyas of the court
saw

16 Blood trickle from Draupadī's mouth,
as she lay stunned by Kīcaka's kick.
A great commotion rose in the sabhā.
"Hai! Hai!"

17 All shouted: "Kīcaka! Son of a Sūta!
You have done great wrong.
Why do you harm
this helpless girl?"

18 Bhīma and Yudhiṣṭhira were sitting
in the sabhā at that time
and witnessed the outrage
on Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

19 Mahā-minded Bhīma clenched his teeth,
and said to himself in anger:
I will see to it that wicked-ātmaned Kīcaka
pays with his life.

20 His eye-lashes rose in fury;
they seemed covered with smoky wrath;
sweating wrinkles appeared
on his forehead.

21 The crusher-of-valiant-enemies passed his hand
across his forehead.
Fury bubbled inside him;
he wanted to stand up, many times.

22 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, afraid of being discovered,
pressed his thumb on Bhīma's thumb,
indicating that he should curb
his anger.

23 Yudhiṣṭhira expressly hinted to Bhīma
to remain calm;
Bhīma stared fixedly,
like a musth elephant at a huge tree.

24 "Ballava," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"why do you stare at that tree?
Looking for fuel? If you want wood,
go out and get it.

25 Remember: respect each leaf of the tree
that shelters you.
Keep in mind its benefits
and give it your homage."

26 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma understood his brother,
and kept silent.
Seeing Bhīma's emotionlessness
and Yudhiṣṭhira's calm,

27 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī was enraged.
Her eyes burned red with hatred for Kīcaka.
She lay on the floor
and sobbed uncontrollably.

28 Lovely-hipped Draupadī rose
and stood in front of the sabhā,
looked at her forgiving husbands,
and addressed king Virāṭa.

29 Following the dharma of their promise,
they kept their identities concealed;
but Draupadī's eyes flashed angrily
as the spoke.

30 "Let all rājās who care for their subjects,
who cherish dharma,
follow truth, and treat their subjects
like their own children,

31 Take a pledge
to protect the defenceless as well.
Those kings who treat loved ones
and hated ones

32 With equal justice, those who impartially
apply dharma
in disputes involving themselves,
get the benefits of both the worlds.

33 O rājā, you sit on Dharma's seat.
I am defenceless. Protect me.

34 Mahārāja, I am innocent.
And you saw wicked-ātmaned Kīcaka
pursue me and kick me,
and treat me like his slave.

35 King of the Matsyas!
You look after your subjects
as a father after his children.
The king who adopts adharma
out of folly is soon overcome
by his enemies.

36 You belong to the Matsya dynasty,
whose ideal has always been truth.
Your birth
is in a family of dharma.

37 I come to you, O lord of men,
for protection today.
O Indra-among rājās,
save me from ill-motived Kīcaka.

38 He knows I am helpless,
and so he dared insult me.
This man of low ātman
does not care for dharma.

39 Those who avoid unworthy acts,
and cultivate worthy ones,
those who protect their subjects,
reach the heavenly realms.

40 But he who knows the difference
between worthy and unworthy,
and yet oppresses his subjects,
goes straight to hell.

41 Kings do not get as much dharma
from yajñas, charity, and guru-respect
as they do
from performing worthy deeds.

42 At the time of the world's creation,
in the distant past,
Brahmā made clear the distinction
between virtue and vice.

43 Saying, 'Know what's right and wrong
in this ambivalent world;
for as you act, you will receive
the fruits of karma.

44 The good-doer receives good fruits,
the ill-doer ill.
According to one's karma,
one receives heaven or hell.

45 If good is done through delusion,
or ill through delusion,
the price has to be paid after death
in slow penance.'

46 This is the advice Brahmā gave Śatakratu-Indra.
before leaving him.
Śakra-Indra returned to heaven
and began his lordship of the gods.

47 O Indra-among-rājās! Follow the advice
of god-of-gods Parameṣṭhin Brahmā,
and choose clearly
between right and wrong."

48 Draupadī, princess of Pāñcāla, pleaded
before the bull-brave Matsya king,
and lamented copiously, but he refrained
from chastising Kīcaka.

49 The Matsya-rājā Virāṭa very gently
spoke to Kīcaka
suggesting that he should stop behaving
as he had done,

50 But he did not punish the guilty son of a Sūta.
Seeing this,
the Pāñcāla rājā's daughter Draupadī,
as lovely as a daughter of the gods,

51 Draupadī who knew the subtleties of dharma,
simple and innocent Draupadī
silently invoked
the supreme dharma,

52 And once again pleaded before Virāṭa
in the open sabhā.
The lovely-thighed lady gazed straight
at the sabhā members and sadly said:

53 “This son of a Sūta has dared kick
    the revered wife
of those whose enemies tremble
    even when five kingdoms away.

54 This son of a Sūta has dared kick
    the revered wife
of those who respect Brahmins, speak truth,
    and donate without being asked.

55 This son of a Sūta has dared kick
    the revered wife
of those whose *dundubhi* drum-beats and bow-twangs
    are constantly heard.

56 This son of a Sūta has dared kick
    the revered wife
of those who have energy, self-control,
    prowess and celf-respecting dignity.

57 This son of a Sūta has dared kick
    the revered wife
of those who could destroy the world
    but are checked by dharma.

58 Where are the mahā-chariot-warriors today,
    wandering in disguise,
who once offered refuge
    to anyone who asked?

59 How is it that those stalwarts quietly endure,
    like eunuchs,
the humiliation of their innocent, chaste wife
    by this Sūta’s son?

60 Where is their reputed wrath,
    where is their prowess and bravery
that cannot save their own wife
    from this wicked-ātmaned scoundrel?

61 And what can I do in the city of Virāṭa,
    the defiler of dharma
who overlooks this wickedness
    in front of his eyes?

62 He is a rājā, but does not behave like a rājā
with Kīcaka.
King,
you have the dharma of a robber!

63 King of Matsya! It is not right
that I be outraged in your presence.
Let your sabhā-members
witness Kīcaka's crime!

64 Kīcaka has no dharma,
but neither has the king of Matsya.
The sabhā-members who sit and watch
have no dharma."

65 Graceful Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī (continued Vaiśampāyana),
weeping profusely,
stood in the court of Virāṭa
and accused Virāṭa.

66 Virāṭa replied:
"I know nothing of your relations with him.
How can I judge
if I do not have the facts of the case?"

67 The sabhā-members, however,
applauded Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
saying *"Sādhu! Sādhu!* Excellent! Excellent!"
and condemned Kīcaka.

68 The sabhā-members said:
"The man who has this graceful,
large-eyed lady as wife
possesses a most precious jewel.

69 This faultless-figured, supremely graceful lady
has no equal on earth.
To us she seems to be
a perfect blameless devī.

70 A radiant, healthy body;
loveliness outshining the lotus';
the gait of a *haṁsa*; a *kunda*-flower smile;
grace abounding;

71 All thirty-two teeth firmly set
and brilliantly white;
glossy, soft hair –
how did he dare kick such a lady?

72 This lady who has three elegant folds
on her stomach,
all three enchantingly noticeable –
how did he dare kick such a lady?

73 She who possesses the auspicious signs
of lotus, *cakra*, crown,
conch, temple and *makara* –
how did he dare kick such a lady?

74 She who has the four graceful curves,
all half-circling
auspiciously to the right –
how did he dare kick such a lady?

75 This lotus-eyed lady
whose hands, feet and teeth
have no space between them –
how did he dare kick her?

76 She who is as lovely as fortune-favoured
Śakra-Indra's wife Indrāṇī,
as enchanting as an apsarā–
she does not deserve to be kicked."

77 Yudhiṣṭhira listened to the pūjā-respect
given to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
by the sabhā-members, and angry sweat
broke out on his forehead.

78 Lovely-thighed Draupadī kept sighing
and staring at the floor,
and silently waited,
for Yudhiṣṭhira was about to say something.

79 Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira
looked at his beloved royal wife
and said: "*Sairandhri*! Go!
Go now to Sudeṣṇā's mansion!

80 Brave wives devoted to their husbands
sometimes have to suffer in silence –
but that suffering takes them to the realms
obtained by their husbands.

81 It seems that your radiant gandharva husbands
do not think this the right time
to show their anger,
or come to your help.

82 Lovely-wavy-haired lady! Listen to what I say
about the dharma of mokṣa.
This is what dharma says
about the family-dharma of women.

83 Women do not need yajñas, śrāddhas,
and self-mortification:
the way to heaven for them
is to serve their husbands.

84 A woman is never free.
As a girl, she is protected by her father;
as wife, by husband;
in old age, by her son.

85 A wife devoted to her husband
endures hardships
and slanders from enemies,
but never criticises her husband.

86 In this way faithful wives
achieve realms of high merit.
Even Vṛtra-slaying Indra is incapable
of defeating your angry husbands.

87 Large-and-lovely-eyed lady,
recall any understanding you have
with your husbands.
No dharma excels patience, O forgiving lady.

88 Patience is truth,
Patience is charity,
Patience is dharma,
Patience is tapasyā.
This world and the next

Are only attainable
By those who practise
The virtue of patience.

89 Two sides, six-months summer solstice
and six-months winter solstice,
Twelve limbs, the months,
Twentyfour aspects, the fortnights,
Three hundred and sixty spokes, the days –
Such is Time.
Remember this,
And learn to be patient if a month falls short."

90 Draupadī heard (continued Vaiśampāyana),
and stood silent,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira went on:
"*Sairandhrī*, you don't know the occasion,
you weep like an actress;
you are disturbing our dice-game.

91 So go back. The gandharvas know
what is good for you, *Sairandhrī*.
They will remove your sorrow
and the man who has harmed you."

92 Draupadī said: "I will follow dharma
for the sake of my kind gandharva husbands,
the eldest of whom
is addicted to dice.
It seems to me that they will kill all
who insult me."

93 Saying this, lovely-thighed Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
hair dishevelled
and eyes flaming with frustration,
ran towards the mansion of Sudeṣṇā.

94 Her continuous weeping
had washed her face
and she looked as lovely as the moon-maṇḍala
freed from clutching clouds.

95 Like a graceful dust-smeared leader-elephant
was beautiful Draupadī
(whose thighs resembled the curve
of an elephant's trunk).

96 Her breasts had no space between them,
her eyes were like a deer's.
She escaped from Kīcaka,
like the planet-rājā moon from clouds.

97 The Pāṇḍavas would gladly
give their lives for her sake,
yet those followers of dharma
chose to be silent and patient.
They did not know their full prowess,
like the ocean not knowing its limits.

98 "Graceful-hipped lady," Sudeṣṇā said,
"who has hurt you, good woman,
why are you crying?
Whose happiness is doomed to end today?

99 Lotus-lovely lady,
with radiant eyes and lips,
why is your full moon-face smeared with tears?
Wipe them away.

100 You who have the lovely black eyes
of a wooden doll,
you who have *bimba*-fruit lips,
why are you crying?"

101 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī sighed deeply and said:
"You know everything, and yet you ask.
You sent me to your brother.
Why pretend?

102 I went to him to get wine for you.
Kīcaka kicked me
in the rājā's sabhā
as if in a deserted forest."

103 "Wavy-haired lady," replied Sudeṣṇā,
"if you wish it,
I will order kama-stricken Kīcaka killed
for molesting you."

104 Draupadī said:
"Others whom he has harmed will kill him.
I have no doubt that today
he will go to Yama's realm.

105 Prepare for his death-rites today,
though he is still living.
Give all you can in charity.
Look your last on him.

106 One of my five dharma-practising husbands
is so huge and powerful
that none equals him
in physical strength.

107 Angered, he can destroy the world
in a single night.
I do not know why my any-form-assuming
husbands remain unmoved."

108 After saying this to Sudeṣṇā
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Sairandhrī, lost is sorrow,
took a vow for the destruction of Kīcaka.

109 The other palace ladies pleaded with her;
so did Sudeṣṇā.
But she would neither bathe, nor eat,
nor change her clothes.

110 Her face had streaks of blood,
her eyes were full of tears.
Seeing her in this deplorable plight,
the palace ladies
in their hearts also began desiring
the destruction of Kīcaka.

111 "Aho! What a terrible thing!"
said Janamejaya.
"Mahā-fortune-favoured husband-devoted Draupadī
kicked by Kīcaka!

112 When Jayadratha abducted her,
she thought of her husbands'
cousin-sister Duḥśalā,
and refrained from cursing Jayadratha.

113 But when wicked-ātmaned Kīcaka
dared to touch her and kick her,
what prevented mahā-fortune-favoured Kṛṣṇā-
Draupadī from cursing him then and there?

114 Devī Draupadī knew dharma,
she spoke the truth, she had great courage.
How could she allow herself
to be fondled and molested?

115 It is unbelievable.
There must be a profound reason
why she did so. Tell me, O Brahmin,
I am deeply perturbed.

116 Tell me: what family was Kīcaka,
the Matsya-king's arrogant brother-in-law,
born in?
How did he get so intoxicated with power?

117 Enhancer of the glory of the Kurus
(replied Vaiśampāyana),
you have asked an appropriate question.
I will explain everything, O king.

118 A son born of a Brahmin mother
and Kṣatriya father, O king,
is called Sūta. Sūtas alone are the twice-born
among *pratiloma* mixed marriages.

119 Such a twice-born one is also called
a Rathakāra,
and considered lower than Kṣatriya
but higher than Vaiśya.

120 In earlier times kings intermarried
with the Sūtas,
but the title rājā was never given
to a Sūta.

121 For the Sūtas was reserved
a special Sūta-kingdom
which a certain Sūta obtained
by dedicated service of Kṣatriyas.

122 The well-known king Kekaya
was such a Sūta-rājā.
He was born to a Kṣatriya girl,
and was an excellent charioteer.

123 O excellent Kaurava!
His wife Mālavī had many sons.
The greatest among them was Kīcaka,
an accomplished, never defeated warrior.

124 Kekaya's second queen was also
a princess of Mālava.
She had a daughter called Citrā,
the youngest sister
of the Kīcaka-clan, also called Sudeṣṇā,
later Virāṭa's beloved wife.

125 Virāṭa's first queen was the Kosala princess
Surathā, daughter of Śveta.
After she died, king Kekaya married
Sudeṣṇā to Virāṭa.

126 Sudeṣṇā was able to remove the grief
rājā Virāṭa felt
over his first queen's death.
For the glory of the Matsyas,
a daughter Uttarā and a son Uttara
were born to Sudeṣṇā-devī.

127 O rājā! Kīcaka had the highest affection
for his step-sister Sudeṣṇā,
and he passed his days happily
in the palace of Virāṭa.

128 His brothers also treated him
with great respect.
All stayed in Virāṭa's palace,
bringing lustre and glory and wealth.

129 Actually it was the Daitya anti-god Kāleya
who was born
as the Kīcaka-brothers.
The eldest Kāleya was called Bāṇa.

130 He was a ferocious warrior,
expert in the arts and skills of war,
he challenged Dharma itself.
(Bāṇa was Kīcaka).

131 With the help of power-intoxicated Kīcaka,
King Virāṭa
extended his kingdom far and wide,
as did Indra over the anti-gods.

132 The Mekhalas, Trigartas, Daśārṇas, Kaserukas,
Mālavas, Yavanas, Pulindas, Kāśis, Kosalas,

133 Aṅgas, Baṅgas, Kaliṅgas, Taṅgaṅas, Parataṅganas,
Maladas, Nisadhas, Tundikeras, Koṅkaṇas.

134 Karadas, Niṣiddhas, Śivas, Duṣihallikas,
And many other brave soldiers of various armies
Were defeated by Kīcaka, and their lands annexed.

135 That is why Virāṭa appointed
the ten-thousand-elephant-strong Kīcaka
as the commander
of his armed forces.

136 The ten brothers of Kīcaka were considered
as powerful as the son of Dāsaratha, Rāma.
They were devoted followers
of Kīcaka.

137 The power-puffed hero Kīcaka,
Virāṭa's brother-in-law,
considered none his equal in prowess,
not even Virāṭa.

138 I have given you a detailed account
of Kīcaka's accomplishments.
Let me now tell you why Draupadī
did not curse him.

139 Hatred destroys tapasyā, for which reason
ṛṣis are unwilling to cast curses,
Pāñcālī-Draupadī, aware of this,
refrained from cursing him.

140 Patience is dharma,
Patience is charity,
Patience is yajña.
Patience is glory,
Patience is truth,
Patience is fame,
Patience is supreme.

141 Patience is merit,
Patience is *tirtha*,
Patience is all.
So says śrutī-revelation.
Kṣamā sarvaṁ iti śruti.
This world belongs
To those who are patient.
Draupadī, knowing this,
Chose to be patient.

142 Realising the wishes of her dharma-following,
forgiveness-inclined husbands,
the large-eyed, chaste lady
decided not to curse Kīcaka.

143 All the Pāṇḍavas witnessed
the shame of Draupadī,
but silently suppressed the flames
of their anger.

144 Mahā-muscled Bhīma was ready to crush
Kīcaka on the spot,
but shore-steady Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
checked his ocean-billowing rage.

145 Bhīma's anger kept simmering inside him.
Late that night,
he heaved deep sighs,
and slept fitfully.

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 Molested by the Sūta's son
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
lovely Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī kept brooding
on how to get Kīcaka killed.

2 She went to her quarters.
Slender-waisted Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī washed herself;
she performed all the ablutions
she considered necessary.

3 She washed her dress,
and she sobbed as she did so,
confused on what would be the best way
to dispel her grief.

4 *What shall I do? Where shall I go?*
How best can I get this done?
As she worried thus,
she thought of Bhīma.

5 *Who but Bhima can do*
what I dearly want done?
With this thought she rose
and left her bed that night.

6 The large-eyed lady Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
a lady of wifely devotion,
the husbands-protected chaste lady
went to Bhīma.

7 She was sorely troubled,
she trembled as she went.
She said: "So long as the vicious general,
my molester,

8 Lives, how can you even think
of sleeping soundly?"
She said this immediately
as she entered the room.

9 Bhīma lay there fast asleep,
snoring like a rājā-of-beasts lion.
The room was ablaze with her beauty
and mahātmā Bhīma's splendour.

10 Sweet-smiling Pāñcālī-Draupadī approached Bhīma
with the passion of a three-year old cow
mating with a bull
in her first season,
like a she-crane flying to her mate
at the time of pairing.

11 The princess of Pāñcāla twined herself
round Pāṇḍu's middle son
as a creeper embraces a huge śāla-tree
on the Gomatī's banks.

12 She clasped him firmly in her arms;
faultless-figured Draupadī
woke him as a lioness wakes a lion
in a lonely forest.

13 She received him as a she-elephant
takes in a massive tusker.
The faultless Pāñcāla princess,
in a voice as sweet
as the melody of a rāga,
said to Bhīma:

14 "Get up, Bhīma! Why do you sleep like a corpse?
Are you dead,
that the scoundrel lives
after defiling your wife?"

15 Cloud-dark-skinned Bhīma,
stirred out of his deep sleep,
left his bed
and sat on the cushion-decorated couch.

16 Kuntī's son said to his beloved wife:
"What is wrong?
What has made you come rushing to me
like this?

17 You look pale and worried –
your grace is disgraced.
You look harassed. Tell me everything,
in every detail.

18 Sad news or glad news,
pain-producing or pleasure-providing,
tell me the truth,
I will do what I can, once I know.

19 You know, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
you can completely trust me
to do anything for you.
I have repeatedly come to your help.

20 Tell me what you want, quickly,
why you are here –
and hurry back to your bed
before the others are up."

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 Shame-stricken Draupadī's large eyes seemed
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
to fill with tears. She gazed at the ground,
standing silent.

2 Yudhiṣṭhira's favourite brave brother,
powerful wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma, said:
"*Priyā*, my elephant-gaited graceful beloved,
tell me."

3 Draupadī said: "How can a woman
who has Yudhiṣṭhira for husband
be ever free from sorrow?
You know my grief – how can you ask?

4 Foe-chastising, mahā-muscled husband!
You know I was shamed
in front of all the Kṣatriyas,
with Duryodhana,
my fathers-in-law Bhīṣma and wise Vidura
and Droṇa and Kṛpa present.

5 O Pāṇḍava, I was dragged by my hair
into the sabhā
in front of my in-laws and Duryodhana.
You saw it all.

6 O Bharata! The doorkeeper dragged me
into the sabhā,
where they branded me a slave.
That pain is still inside me.

7 Tell me, is there any other princess,
any other daughter of a king,
who has suffered the shame
I have suffered?

8 In the forest, during my exile,
wicked-ātmaned Jayadratha
laid hands on me.
I had to swallow that also.

[IV:18:9-17]

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9 O Pāṇḍava, I had to trudge
through strange lands
filled with fierce, venomous beasts –
and this, with you still living!

10 For twelve years I lived
on wild shoots and roots and fruits.
Then in the land of Virāṭa
I became the maid of Sudeṣṇā.

11 I, who walked the path of truth and dharma,
am today another's maid!
I grind lotus and sandalwood
and *hariśyāma*-spice

12 Pastes for king Virāṭa – with you still living!
O Pāṇḍava,
I endured my sorrows
because of my devotion for you.

13 But I am the daughter of Drupada,
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna's sister!
I rose from the sacred fire,
I never walked on bare feet.

14 Is there anyone like me,
still continuing to live
after being kicked by Kīcaka
in rājā Virāṭa's presence?

15 Son of Kuntī, is there any point
in my wanting to live
if you remain unmoved
by these shames that I suffer?

16 O tiger-among-men!
The deranged scoundrel Kicaka,
the commander of the army of rājā Virāṭa,
says to me daily in the palace,

17 Where I pass my days
disguised as a *sairandhrī*,
the wicked-ātmaned swine says,
'Why don't you become my wife?'

18 Foe-crusher, when I hear this
from that doom-deserver,
I feel that my heart will burst
like a ripe fruit.

19 O mahā-powerful Pāṇḍava!
I know you are brave,
powerful energetic, noble.
That is why I come weeping to you.

20 Like a massive sixty-year old elephant
falling on the ground
and crushing to pulp *bilva*-fruit
beneath his bulk,

21 Fall on Kīcaka, O Pāṇḍava lion-among-men!
Trample his head,
and grind it to pulp
with your strong left foot.

22 If Kīcaka is still alive after tonight
to watch the sun rise,
I have determined
I will take my life.

23 Why don't you put the blame on the man
who has brought this on me –
your dice-demented elder brother
mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira?

24 In there anyone but that dice-deluded gambler
who would give up his kingdom,
even his own self,
and go to forest-exile?

25 Even if he had staked his gold coins
morning and evening
for years and years –
and other valuables as well,

26 Such as gold, silver, chariots,
horses, goats, sheep,
camels and mules –
his wealth would have hardly diminished.

27 Bereft of all his wealth by compulsive dice-play,
he now is silent –
like a fool recalling uselessly
his own misdeeds.

28 Once, when he marched, ten thousand
golden-garlanded elephants followed him;
now he has to live
by his showmanship at dice.

29 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
honoured in Indraprastha
by hundreds of thousands of kings,
once lord of unparalleled power,

30 At whose banquet-hall
a hundred thousand serving-maids
moved with plates serving guests lavishly
day and night,

31 Who used to donate in charity
a thousand gold coins,
is now the victim
of his compulsive gambling.

32 Many sweet-voiced poets and praise-singers,
wearing glittering ear-rings
encrusted with gems,
eulogised him morning and evening.

33 Hundreds of ṛṣis excelling in tapasyā
and learned in śrutī-scriptures
adorned his sabhā
and had their desires fulfilled.

34 Eighty-eight thousand *snātaka* Brahmins
of the domestic order
were assigned thirty maids each
in the palace of Yudhiṣṭhira.

35 At the same time he provided shelter
to ten thousand
sex-abstaining, never-gift-accepting ascetics.
Look at that lord-of-men today!

36 That lord-of-men, free from cruelty,
brimming with kindness,
generous and just, is now reduced
to living in disguise.

37 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira had the gentlest disposition,
and cared
for all the subjects in his kingdom –
the blind, the old,
the infirm, the helpless, the orphans,
and others in distress.

38 The same Yudhiṣṭhira is today
a servant of Virāṭa,
calls himself Kaṅka,
and suffers as if in hell.

39 The king who received royal homage
in Indraprastha
today has to beg for his living
from another person.

40 The protector of many
who were protectors of others –
that rājā now
is seeking protection by another.

41 He dazzled the whole world
with the glory of his power.
The same rājā Yudhiṣṭhira is today
one of Virāṭa's dependants.

42 O Pāṇḍava, look at the Pāṇḍavas
reduced to serving others,
who were once themselves served
by ṛṣis and rājās.

43 Who will not be touched
with pity and sorrow,
seeing Yudhiṣṭhira sitting near
and singing another's praises?

44 Who will not be touched
with pity and sorrow,
seeing the dharmātmā,
vastly-learned Yudhiṣṭhira become a servant?

45 O descendant of Bharata!
Look at this descendant of Bharata,
once honoured by heroes in his sabhā,
reduced into a servant!

46 Bhīma, have you no feeling
for my abject condition,
a husbandless helpless woman
lost in the swirling sea of my sorrows?"

SECTION NINETEEN

1 "Descendant of Bharata," continued Draupadī,
"let me pour out my mahā-grief to you.
Don't blame me.
My breaking heart speaks to you.

2 Is there anyone who does not suffer
to see you working as the cook Ballava,
a calling utterly beneath
your bull-brave Bharata dignity?

3 What can hurt more than that people
should know you as Ballava,
the kitchen cook of Virāṭa,
sunk in the service of another?

4 How I suffer when I see you
cooking meals for Virāṭa,
and serving him after you are finished
with kitchen chores!

5 How my mind grieves when I see
the delighted king
ordering you to fight elephants
before giggling palace girls.

6 I am on the verge of fainting
when I see you wrestling
with lions, tigers and buffaloes
in the presence of Sudeṣṇā.

7 And then the queen and her maids rise
and she sees me alive still,
though in a semi-swoon,
and she turns

8 To her maids and speaks to them:
'This sweet-smiling lady
must have dharma-feelings for the cook,
being so near him

9 Most of the time – she can't bear to see him
fight fierce beasts.
Well, the *sairandhrī* is very pretty,
and he is handsome.

10 Who knows what goes on in the heart
of a woman?
I like the couple. Naturally she suffers,
and feels for him.

11 They came to the palace at the same time.
It must be that they are lovers.'
These are the words
she taunts me with.

12 And when I flare up,
that strengthens her suspicion
that I feel for you.
I feel so ashamed when she teases me.

13 Hero-of-great-feats Bhīma!
I cannot live any more,
seeing you cast into to servanthood,
along with Yudhiṣṭhira.

14 And young Arjuna, who could defeat
gods and men from his one chariot,
now teaches dainty dancing
to rājā Virāṭa's daughters.

15 That son of Pṛtha-Kuntī, whose ātman-power
gratified Agni in the Khāṇḍava forest,
lurks in the women's quarters
like fire in a well.

16 That bull-brave hero,
whom enemies feared,
must now wear a disguise
that is considered contemptible.

17 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna whose mace-like arms
carry bowstring scars,
must now shamefully hide them
behind conch-shell bangles.

18 His twanging bowstring and leaṭher straps
struck terror in his enemies;
now his sweet sentimental singing
delights the ladies.

19 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's head
carried a radiant sun-like diadem;
now he wears plaited braids
disguised in shabby curls.

20 When I see the bow-wielding hero
in his shabby curling braids,
surrounded by women,
I am pained to my heart.

21 The mahātmā warrior who knew the secrets
of celestial missiles,
the all-learned one,
now dangles a pair of ear-rings!

22 The young hero, whom ṭhousands of rājās
of incalculable prowess
were unable to defeat,
as the ocean cannot leap its shores,

23 Now teaches delicate dancing
to the daughters of Virāṭa,
and spends his days posing
as one more place-servant.

24 That excellent brother of yours, Bhīma,
the rattle
of whose chariot-wheels made
the mountained-and-forested earth tremble,

25 Whose birth, O Bhīma,
made all the sorrows of Kuntī disappear, –
that younger brother of yours
now compels the pity of my tearful lament.

26 And I sink in my own despair
when I see him shuffling towards me,
ear-rings flashing,
conch-bangles jangling.

27 There was no one on earth to equal
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna in bowmanship.
What does he do now? –
sing to crowds of palace women.

28 The whole world honoured his truth,
dharma and bravery.
I see this he-man turned into a she-man –
and I sink in my despair.

29 That god-like hero surrounded by girls
in the music-hall,
like a rutting elephant
by she-elephants,

30 In the court of Virāṭa,
king of the Matsya-territory –
when I see this, the four directions
swirl in my head.

31 I hope my mother-in-law does not know
of the pathetic state of her son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
or that of gambling-addicted sorrow-stricken
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira.

32 The Arjuna who gratified Agni
with the divine missiles
he received from Indra, Varuṇa, Vāyu,
Brahmā, Agni and Viṣṇu,

33 The Arjuna who from a single chariot
routed the gods,
whose ātman-power is great,
who released Vāyu, Gandharva and Viṣṇu

34 Missiles, as well as Brahmā, Śīva
and Sthūṇakarṇa missiles,
battling against the anti-Indra mahā-antigods
Puloma and Kālakeya,

35 And the Nivātakavacas, and crushed them –
that same Arjuna
now lurks in the women's apartments
like fire in a well.

36 I see him like a big bull
let loose in a cow-shed,
disguised in the palace,
and my heart goes out to Kuntī.

37 When I see the youngest brother Sahadeva
pretending to be an expert in cattle,
disguised as a cowherd,
I become pale.

38 The thought of Sahadeva as a cowherd
keeps revolving in my mind,
and I get no sleep,
let alone rest, O Bhīma.

39 I have no idea, O mahā-muscled Bhīma,
what bad karma
Sahadeva of great prowess did
in order to deserve this.

40 O best of the Bharatas, I feel ashamed
when I see
your dear brother relegated to caring
for Virāṭa's cattle.

41 He loiters about
in the red robes of a cowherd,
trying to please Virāṭa with his pretence.
Oh, I feel sick!

42 My mother-in-law Kuntī
always used to praise Sahadeva highly,
saying he was noble-charactered
and deservedly renowned.

43 'He is gentle, soft-spoken,
a man of high dharma;
I love him dearly. O Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
do console him in his distress.

44 Look after him day and night in the forest;
he is young, but he is brave,
he is loyal and devoted to Yudhiṣṭhira.
Feed him yourself, Pāñcālī.'

45 Those were the words I remember
which weeping Kuntī,
hugging her son, whispered to me,
as we left for the mahā-forest.

46 And now I see that excellent hero Sahadeva
caring for cattle
and sleeping on calf-skin!
I wish I were dead.

47 See! How times change!
Handsome and brave and intelligent Nakula
must now content himself
with feeding the horses of Virāṭa!

48 His enemies fled in terror
when they saw him on the battlefield –
now Granthika trains horses
for the mahārāja! See!

49 I can see him, gracefully waiting
on the glitteringly-dressed
king of the Matsyas,
exhibiting his trained horses!

50 O foe-crushing Pārtha-Bhīma!
A thousand sorrows are mine
because of Yudhiṣṭhira.
Can you ever think I can be happy?

51 And there are so many other sorrows
that I have, even greater ones.
Kuntī's son, listen to me.
I will tell you.

52 That all these sorrows should be mine
while all of you
are still alive –
what grief can be greater than this?"

[IV:20:1-9]

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SECTION TWENTY

1 "It's because of that compulsive gambler,"
continued Draupadī,
"that I am now a *sairandhrī*
in Sudeṣṇā's service.

2 O-foe-crusher, I am a princess –
look at my dreary downfall!
Experiencing the worst,
I still hope for the best.

3 Well, success is short,
victory and defeat are brief.
I think of this, and hope my husbands
will again prosper.

4 Prosperity and poverty revolve like a wheel.
Bhīma,
I think of this, and hope my husbands
will again prosper.

5 Whatever leads to victory,
leads to defeat also.
I live on that hope.
Why don't you treat me as dead?

6 I have heard that those who give,
one day may have to beg;
those who kill, get killed;
those who mock, get mocked.

7 Nothing's beyond the reach of fate,
no one changes fate.
And so I wait, hoping for the return
of good fortune.

8 There will be water again
where there once was water.
I wait for this change,
I wait for better times to come.

9 When fate brings down a flourishing trade,
a man
should take steps to correct
what fate has undone.

10 My sorrows are such that,
whether you listen to me or not,
I will tell you
why I have to speak in this way.

11 I am Drupada's daughter,
mother of the sons of Pāṇḍu, a queen.
What woman would want to live
suffering as I have suffered?

12 Isn't it true that my shame,
O foe-crushing descendant of Bharata,
brings shame on the Kurus, the Pāñcālas,
and the Pāṇḍavas?

13 Is there any woman with brothers, sons,
and father-in-law
as I have – all reasons for rejoicing –
who has suffered like me?

14 O bull-brave Bharata!
I must have done woeful wrong
to the Creator in my youth
to suffer as I do now.

15 O Pāṇḍava, look at my pallid skin!
Even the hardships
of a forest existence were not able
to produce this pallor.

16 Bhīma, you know what happiness
used to be once mine.
Now I am a slave, numb with shock,
I have no peace.

17 Since mahā-muscled, expert bowman Arjuna lives here
like fire hidden in ashes,
what can I say except that fate
has done this to me.

18 O Pārtha-Bhīma, it is impossible for me
to understand the workings of fate.
Your abject downfall
could not have been predicted.

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19 There was a time when all of you –
like so many Indras –
gave me comfort. Now I must comfort
those inferior to me.

20 Look, Pāṇḍava! I suffer! –
while all of you are still alive,
very much so. I don't deserve this.
How things change!

21 Once she had the sea-encircled earth
as her dominion;
now she must live a slave of Sudeṣṇā,
afraid of her.

22 Once she had servants walking behind her
and in front;
now she must walk behind Sudeṣṇā
or in front, as ordered.

23 There is another intolerable sorrow I have.
Listen, Kuntī's son.
Once she pounded unguents for none
except herself and Kuntī;
now she grinds paste for others.
Go, Kaunteya-Bhīma, prosper –

24 But look at my hands, Kuntī's son,
so unlike what they used to be."
Saying this, she showed Bhīma
her chapped palms.

25 "She who never feared Kuntī
or any of her husbands,
now trembles as the slave
of the king of Matsya, thinking,

26 'What will the great king say
if he disapproves of my unguents?
He does not want anyone else
to grind the sandalpaste.'"

27 She laid bare her sorrows to Bhīma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and, looking at him,
lovely Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī began sobbing silently.

28 She sighed heavily and, with tears in her eyes,
again and again
spoke in this manner to Bhīma,
stirring him deeply.

29 "Pāṇḍava Bhima!
It must be that I have greatly wronged
the gods in the past.
If I have, I would prefer to die."

30 Wolf-waisted foe-conquering Bhīma
covered his face
with the delicate, chapped palms of his wife,
and burst into tears.

31 Kuntī's valiant son took both her hands
in his own and,
with tears streaming down his cheeks,
said to her in anguish:

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 "*Dhik*! Shame on the mahā-strength of my arms!
Shame on Phālguna-Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva-bow
that your pink hands
are now chapped!

2 I could have pulverised
the sabhā of Virāṭa
but Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira glanced towards me,
and I refrained.

3 Like a huge elephant
I could have trampled Kīcaka's head –
that pride-intoxicated, power-mad head –
with a single kick.

4 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, when I saw him kick you,
I wanted
to bring the kingdom of the Matsyas
crashing on their heads.

5 But Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira stopped me,
my lovely wife.
I read his mind, and checked myself,
and kept silent.

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6 That I failed to kill the Kauravas
the day we were exiled
from our kingdom,
that I have not yet killed
Suyodhana-Duryodhana, Karṇa,
Śakuni the son of Subala,

7 And evil Duḥśāsana –
all this burns every limb in my body
as if a flaming rod
has pierced it.
My lovely-thighed wife, do not give up dharma;
curb your anger, mahā-minded lady.

8 Gracious and graceful lady,
should rājā Yudhiṣṭhira ever hear you
speak harshly, as you did,
he will take his life.

9 Slim-waisted beauty,
if Dhanañjaya-Arjuna or the twins hear you,
they will commit suicide;
and if they do I will too.

10 You must have heard of the Bhārgava ṛṣi
Cyavana around whom
ants built an ant-hill, but his wife Sukanyā
remained faithful to him.

11 You may have heard that in the distant past,
Indrasenā,
who was as lovely as Nārāyaṇī,
served her husband for a thousand years.

12 You must have heard of Janaka's daughter Sītā,
princess of Videha,
who uncomplainingly followed her husband
to the desolate mahā-forest.

13 O graceful-hipped lady!
The dear queen of Rāma
suffered hugely at the hands of the rākṣasas,
but finally was reunited with Rāma.

14 And think of Lopāmudrā,
so beautiful and so young,
who renounced physical comforts
and followed her husband Agastya.

15 Think of the spotlessly chaste Sāvitrī
who followed her husband Satyavān,
Dyumatsena's son,
to the realm of Yama.

16 It seems to me, my auspicious wife,
that you possess
all the virtues associated with these lovely,
husband-devoted, pious ladies.

17 Wait only a little more –
no more than a fortnight –
and the thirteenth year will end,
and you will be queen of queens.

18 I take a vow of truth here –
this will be so : I promise it.
You should follow the examples
of these noble ladies.

19 My lovely wife, your bhakti for your husbands
and your noble character
will place you above all
the lords of the earth."

20 Draupadī replied, "Bhīma,
I cannot endure it any more.
I do not blame rājā Yudhiṣṭhira –
it is my grief that breaks out.

21 O mahā-powerful Bhīma,
what use is it to think of the past?
Let us do what has to be done now,
at this hour.

22 Sudeṣṇā is jealous of my beauty, Bhīma.
She fears the rājā desires me,
and wants to send me away
from here.

23 Kīcaka is shrewd enough to realise this,
and that is why
the vicious-minded wretch
is perpetually soliciting me.

24 At first I was furious,
but I checked my anger, Bhīma, and I said:
'Kīcaka, you are a victim of kāma.
Save yourself.

25 I am the beloved wife of five gandharvas –
their queen.
They will lose their temper,
and they will kill you.'

26 The vicious-minded Kīcaka retorted,
'Sweet-smiling *sairandhrī*!
Where did you get the idea
that I fear the gandharvas?

27 I could wipe out a hundred thousand gandharvas
on the battlefield.
Remember that, timid one,
and say you will be mine.'

28 When I heard this, I again pleaded
with the kāma-stricken Sūta,
'How can you ever be the equal
of the radiant gandharvas?

29 I was born in a noble family,
and I follow dharma;
I do not wish anyone's death;
therefore, you are still alive, Kīcaka.'

30 Vicious-ātmaned Kīcaka heard this,
and laughed hysterically.
Then Kaikeyī-Sudeṣṇā repeatedly urged me
to go to Kīcaka,

31 Because she wanted to please the brother
she was fond of.
"Gracious girl, go,
get me wine from Kīcaka's mansion.'

32 The instant he saw me,
the Sūta's son started flattering me.
When that failed, he became furious,
and forced himself on me.

33 I could guess what the wicked-ātmaned
Kīcaka's motives were,
so I ran as fast as I could
to the rājā for protection.

34 That wicked-ātmaned son of a Sūta
pushed me on the ground
and began kicking me
in the very presence of the rājā.

35 Virāṭa saw this, Kaṅka saw this,
the charioteers, royal minions,
royal scholars and merchants saw this
in front of their eyes.

36 I begged and pleaded before the rājā
and Kaṅka.
The rājā neither stopped the outrage
nor ordered the culprit punished.

37 Powerful Kīcaka is the rājā's general
and charioteer and favourite,
The royal couple love him.
He has no dharma.

38 Evil-ātmaned Kīcaka is aggressive,
proud and pleasure-loving;
he is an adulterer;
he has hoards of money.

39 He squeezes money out of the distressed,
even when they cry out their woes;
he never follows
the straight path of dharma.

40 His ātman is bent on mischief,
he thinks only of viciousness,
he is a willing victim of Kāma's arrows;
I repeatedly begged him,

[IV:21:41-48]

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41 But I know he will molest me
when he gets the chance.
Then I will kill myself.
I have made up my mind.
Where will your mahā-dharma be then,
O my dharma-seeking husbands?

42 You will keep your word,
but you will lose your wife.
If a wife is protected,
one's children are also protected.

43 If one's children are protected,
one's ātman finds refuge.
No wonder the wise call a wife 'Jāya',
'From-whom-one-is-born',
because the ātman is born as one's son
in a wife's womb.

44 The wife also should cherish her husband, saying,
'How otherwise
will he be born in my womb?'
So say the knowers of caste-dharma.

45 What dharma has a Kṣatriya
except to crush his enemies?
Kīcaka kicked me
in front of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,

46 In front of you, O mahā-powerful Bhīma.
O brave Bhīma,
it was you who rescued me
from fierce Jaṭāsura;

47 It was you who, along with your brothers,
saved me from Jayadratha.
I beg of you – kill this depraved wretch
who has molested me.

48 Because he is the king's favourite,
he dares to harm me.
Crush this monster of kāma to pulp,
smash him like a clay pot.

49 If tomorrow the sun rises on a Kīcaka
still alive,
on a man who has been the sole cause
of my misery,

50 I promise you this, Bhīma:
I will drink poison and die,
rather than succumb to him,
O Bhīma, let me die now, in front of you."

51 Saying this, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī laid her head
on Bhīma's chest, and sobbed.
Bhīma embraced her
and tried to console her.

52 He calmed the slender-waisted lady
in many ways,
he soothed Drupada's anguished daughter
with reasonable words,

53 But his mind flamed with anger
as he wiped the tears
streaming on Draupadī's face,
and thought of vicious Kīcaka;
he kept licking the corners of his mouth
with his tongue.

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 Bhīma said, "Gentle one,
I will do what you say.
Gracious lady, I will today kill Kīcaka
and all his friends.

2 Śucismitā, my sweet-smiling Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
forget your sorrow
and make yourself friendly to Kīcaka
tomorrow evening.

3 Virāṭa has a dancing-hall in the palace;
this is where
girls practise in the day
before retiring to their beds at night.

4 There is a magnificent, conveniently-located bed
in that hall.
I have chosen that place to despatch Kīcaka
to his ancestors.

5 When you talk to him; see that no one sees you.
Auspicious one,
arrange so that he approaches you
unsuspectingly."

6 They devised this plan,
and wept as they did so
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
they waited eagerly for the dawn.

7 Night passed, and Kīcaka woke
and went to the palace;
accosting Draupadī, he addressed her
with these words:

8 "I caught you, threw you down, kicked you
in the king's presence.
Escape is impossible – you cannot escape
from my power.

9 Virāṭa is called the rājā of the Matsyas,
but only in name;
I command his army,
I am the real rājā of the Matsyas.

10 So come to me happily, timid one;
let me be your devoted slave,
O lovely-thighed lady,
and I will give you a hundred gold coins

11 On the spot, and a hundred maids
to wait upon you, timid one.
I will give you mule-pulled chariots
if you make love to me."

12 Draupadī replied: "On one condition –
no one must know, Kīcaka,
neither your friends nor your brothers,
that we are lovers.

13 I am afraid my illustrious gandharva husbands
will get to know;
only if you promise me this,
will I agree to your wishes."

14 "Lovely-hipped lady!" exclaimed Kīcaka,
"I gladly agree.
Gracious one, I will come alone.
No one will know.

15 Lady with voluptuous thighs,
I am stricken with passion;
I will have intercourse with you
in such a way
not even your sun-bright gandharvas
will ever get to know."

16 Draupadī said, "The Matsya rājā has a dancing-hall
where girls practise
during the day before retiring to their rooms
at night.

17 Meet me there when it is dark.
The gandharvas
do not know that place.
No blame will attach to us."

18 "Gentle lady," said Kīcaka,
"what you think best is best.
Gracious one, I will come alone
and meet you there, lovely lady.
Lovely hipped beauty, I promise this
on the strength of my good deeds.

19 Exquisite-thighed lady, I will arrange
so that the gandharvas suspect nothing.
Trust me,
and have no fear of the gandharvas."

20 O king! After her plan with Kīcaka
(said Vaiśampāyana),
the half-day
seemed to pass like a whole month.

21 Foolish Kīcaka strode exulting back
to his mansion,
not realising that death had come to him
in *sairandhrī*-form.

22 Deranged by kāma, he busied himself
with perfumes, unguents, and garlands,
trying on every possible means
of adornment.

23 Visions of the ravishing large-eyed beauty
obsessed his mind,
and his soon-to-vanish life
glowed briefly, fiercely, flickering

24 Like the wick of a clay lamp
before it is snuffed out.
It seemed to him that the night passed
much too slowly.

25 He placed complete trust in Draupadī,
because he was obsessed with kāma;
visions of sexual intercourse
sweetened his prolonged night.

26 In the evening
the auspicious lady Draupadī
went to the royal kitchen
to be with her Kaurava-husband Bhīma;

27 The lovely-haired lady said to him:
"Crusher of foes,
I have invited Kīcaka to love-making
in the dancing-hall.

28 O mahā-muscled one, Kīcaka will come alone
to that lonely hall to meet me.
Kill him then,
my husband.

29 Son of Kuntī,
kill Kīcaka, that pompous son of a Sūta.
O Pāṇḍava, catch him in the dancing-hall
and kill him.

30 Most excellent enemy-killer!
Kīcaka's pride makes him mock the gandharvas.
Drag that serpent
out of his stinking lake.

31 Descendant of Bharata,
wipe clean the tears of my sorrow.
Protect your honour and your family's honour.
May success be yours!"

32 Bhīma said: "Lovely-complexioned lady,
these words of yours make you most welcome.
I want no one's help
in this mission.

33 Lovely-complexioned lady, the joy I feel
thinking of Kīcaka's doom
equals the joy I felt
when I killed Hiḍimba.

34 I swear today – by truth, by dharma,
by my own brothers –
I will kill Kīcaka
as the lord-of-the-gods Indra killed Vṛtra.

35 In secret or openly, I will kill him.
If the Matsyas
try to come to his aid,
I will slay them also.

36 Then I will kill Duryodhana,
and regain the whole earth.
Let Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira go on serving
the Matsya king."

37 Draupadī said: "Radiant lord, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
you must not break your promise to me,
You must kill Kīcaka,
his friends and his brothers in secret."

38 Bhīma replied: "I will do as you say,
gentle wife.
Today I will finish Kīcaka
along with all his friends and his brothers.

39 My faultless wife, I will hide in the dark,
unseen by anyone,
and I will crush the head of Kīcaka
who craves what he cannot get,
as an elephant crushes
a *bilva*-fruit."

40 So Bhīma went to the bed
(said Vaiśampāyana)
and huddled there,
like a lion lying in wait for a deer.

41 Kīcaka put on all the fineries
that pleased his fancy,
and came punctually to the dancing hall
to enjoy Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

42 He entered the hall, fantasising pleasantly
on the consummation.
The huge hall was shrouded
in almost total darkness.

43 Vicious-minded Kīcaka came up
to where Bhīma lay disguised,
concealed in one corner
of the bed.

44 The Sūta's son approached Bhīma
who lay stretched on that bed,
burning with remembrance of the insult
to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

45 Kīcaka, impelled by kāma,
approached the supine figure;
his heart thrilled with exquisite sensations;
he smiled and said:

46 "I have already offered you,
O my lovely-eye-browed beauty,
enormous wealth, a hundred slave-maids,
gems and dresses,

47 A palace whose inner apartments will house
young, graceful female attendants,
and contain all kinds

of facilities for games.
I have decided to give you all this
before coming here.

48 And the women of my mansion suddenly
have begun praising me,
saying, 'There is none in the palace like you
so handsome and well-dressed'."

49 "How wonderful," whispered Bhīma,
"that you find yourself handsome
and praiseworthy. Have you touched anyone
as exciting as me?

50 My body is all aflame with your touch!
You are an expert in kāma-dharma.
How can any girl
ever resist you?"

51 Saying this, Bhīma leapt up swiftly
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
the dreadfully powerful, mahā-mascled hero laughed
and said:

52 "You slimy rascal, today your sister
will see me drag you on the ground
as one mahā-elephant
drags another.

53 And you will die, and the *sairandhrī*
will be free again
to do as she likes, and we, her husbands,
will rejoice."

54 Mahā-powerful Bhīma pulled him
by his flower-adorned hair.
Dragged by his hair,
brave Kīcaka somehow managed

55 To break free, and seized the arms of Bhīma
in a fierce grip.
The two were locked
in hand-to-hand combat;

56 They fought like two huge bull-elephants
in the rutting season
over a female of the herd –
two of the finest of men.

57 They fought like the two mighty monkey-lords
Vāli and Sugrīva,
each livid with anger
and confident of victory.

58 They lifted their arms like five-hooded serpents;
the poison of their anger
roused them to attack
with nails and teeth.

59 Powerful Kīcaka struck Bhīma
a colossal blow;
but Bhīma seemed least affected
by it.

60 They grappled and pushed and pulled,
dragging each other
like two massive bulls
locked in a fatal fight.

61 They fought with their nails and with their teeth;
it seemed
as if two enraged tigers
were locked in deadly encounter.

62 They felled each other with tremendous arm-blows;
then each would rise,
and return to fight
like an ichor-streaming elephant.

63 Valiant Bhīma suddenly lunged at Kīcaka,
pinioning him;
but enormously strong Kīcaka wriggled out
and threw him down.

64 As the two giants fought ceaselessly,
the slapping of their arms
sounded like the splintering
of massive bamboo-poles.

65 Suddenly, like a violent gust of wind
toppling a tree,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma hurled himself at Kīcaka
and felled him.

67 Finding an opening, Kīcaka struck Bhīma
on the chest with his knees;
Bhīma wavered
and fell on the ground.

68 He sprawled on the ground briefly;
then he rose with a gigantic leap,
like Antaka-Yama wielding
his mace of death.

69 The strength-intoxicated Sūta and the Pāṇḍava
kept hurling defiance at each other,
grappling late at night
in that deserted hall.

70 When they roared out their challenges
in ferocious anger,
the entire hall seemed to reverberate
and tremble.

71 Bhīma moved swiftly and slammed a blow
on Kīcaka's chest.
Kīcaka burned with anger,
but stood his ground.

72 But it was only for that moment –
the blow was one
that none could withstand,
and the Sūta visibly weakened.

73 Mahā-powerful Bhīma noticed the Sūta
losing energy, and, moving swiftly,
crushed him in a suffocating embrace
against his chest.

74 Bhīma breathed hard and heavily.
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
best of the victorious ones,
twisted Kīcaka's hair.

75 Holding him so, mahā-powerful Bhīma
growled like a famished tiger
that has made a formidable kill
in the forest.

76 Seeing Kīcaka's powers failing,
wolf-waisted Bhīma pressed him
even tighter against his chest,
as one would rope a beast.

77 Kīcaka was by now senseless.
Bhīma began whirling him above his head,
roaring like a cracked *bheri*-drum
all the while.

78 To assuage Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's anger,
wolf-waisted Bhīma gripped
the throat of Kīcaka
and began slowly throttling his enemy.

79 He thrust his knees into the stomach
of vicious Kīcaka,
whose limbs were by now
a mangled mass of flesh,
whose eyes were half-closed.
Bhīma dragged him like a beast.

80 He mauled the semi-conscious Kīcaka,
who was now on the verge of death,
and screamed
as he did so:

81 "Thorn in the flesh of Sairandhrī,
despoiler of our wife,
I kill you! I am free of my debt!
I am at peace!"

82 Eyes flaming with wrath,
Bhīma left Kīcaka
staring wide-eyed,
twitching and terrified,
stripped of his garments
strewn on the ground.

83 Fury still possessed Bhīma.
His squeezed his palms tight,
and bit his lips. Suddenly he jumped
on Kīcaka's body.

84 He hit with legs, arms, neck and head
at the prone body of Kīcaka,
as trident-wielding Pinākadhṛk-Śiva
did to the antigod Gaya.

85 Mahā-powerful Bhīma rolled the mangled flesh
that was Kīcaka
into a large ball,
and showed it to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

86 Mahā-energetic Bhīma said
to finest-among-women Draupadī:
"Pāñcālī-Draupadī, look what I did
to this kāma-sick beast."

87 Mahārāja! Saying this, fearfully-powerful Bhīma
lifted his foot
and kicked hard at the ball-body
of wicked-ātmaned Kīcaka.

88 Then he lit a lamp in the hall
and showed Draupadī
the body-lump of Kīcaka.
The great hero said to Pāñcālī-Draupadī:

89 "My beautiful-haired, gentle wife,
so noble-charactered and gifted –
anyone who lusts for you
will meet this inglorious end of Kīcaka."

90 And now at last, with the horrendous job done,
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's desire accomplished,
Bhīma's anger
began ebbing.

91 He bid farewell to Draupadī
and hurried back to the kitchen.
Responsible for the killing of Kīcaka,
best-of-women Draupadī

92 Was delighted; her suffering was over.
She said to the guards of the sabhā:
"My gandharva husbands
have killed Kīcaka,

93 Because he lusted for another's wife.
You will find him inside."
The guards of the sabhā
of the palace

94 Gathered in thousands, carrying torches.
They saw Kīcaka
lying on the ground, splattered with blood.
They saw him,

95 Without arms and without legs;
and they were terrified and wonderstruck.
Seeing
that awesome inhuman spectacle,

96 They exclaimed: "Where is the neck?
the feet? the arms? the head?"
They were convinced
the gandharvas had slaughtered Kīcaka.

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 Kīcaka's friends and followers gathered
around his mangled body
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and began lamenting loudly.

2 They saw him stiff like a tortoise
pulled in from the sea;
they horripilated;
they shook with disbelieving fear.

3 Bhīma had crushed him to pulp,
as Indra did the Dānava antigod Vṛtra,
but they tried to take him outside
for the saṁskāra funeral rites.

4 The sons of the Sūta saw Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
near one of the palace pillars –
a faultless lady
standing and watching.

5 Some of the brothers of Kīcaka
were among the crowd;
they shouted, "Let's kill her,
for she planned Kīcaka's death.

6 Better, let us burn her along with him
who burned with kāma for her;
let us do something
that would have given him pleasure."

7 They said to Virāṭa,
"She is responsible for Kīcaka's death.
We will burn her with him.
Give us permission to do so."

8 The rājā was aware of the influence
of the Sūtas;
he permitted them to burn the *sairandhrī*
with Kīcaka's body.

9 They surrounded fearful Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
whose eyes stared in paralysed terror,
and violently
laid hands on her.

10 They tied the slender-waisted beauty
to the death-cot of Kīcaka
and joyfully set out
to the place of cremation.

11 O rājā! Carried by the sons of the Sūta,
the husbandless-though-husbanded,
blameless Draupadī cried
for her husbands' help.

12 "Jaya, Jayanta, Vijaya, Jayatsena, Jayadbala!
Wherever you may be,
my husbands,
save me from the Sūta's sons!

13 You whose bows twang like thunder
on the battlefield,
the rattle of whose tremendously
powerful and swift

14 Chariots is heard by all –
O my swift-coursing gandharva husbands,
the sons of the Sūta
are forcibly carrying me away!"

15 Bhīma heard the wailing of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
and, without thinking twice,
jumped from his bed.

16 He shouted: "O *sairandhrī*!
I have heard all that you have said,
Gentle one,
do not fear the Sūtas any more."

17 With these words, mahā-muscled Bhīma
swelled his body,
changed his dress and,
intending to kill the Sūtas,

18 He slipped out of the palace
by a secret exit.
Quickly leaping over the city walls,
Bhīma

19 Sprinted to the cremation ground
where the Sūtas had gathered.
Near the funeral pyre,
he spotted a large tree,

20 Tall as a date-palm, with massive branches
and withered top.
It was over twenty arms-lengths tall.
Dashing against it
with the force of an elephant,
Bhīma uprooted it.

21 Lifting the gigantic twenty arms-lengths-tall tree,
Bhīma charged
towards the Sūtas
like Antāka-Yama brandishing his rod of death.

22 The impact of his thighs,
brushing against banyan,
pipal and *kiṁśuka*-trees,
smashed them and they toppled.

23 Seeing the gandharva bear down upon them
like a wild lion,
the Sūtas shivered with fear
and trepidation.

24 "He comes charging at us, the fierce gandharva,
brandishing a tree.
Let's free the *sairandhrī* –
he comes for her."

25 The spectacle of Bhīma
whirling that enormous tree
made them release the *sairandhrī*
and flee to the city.

26 Like thunder-wielder Indra slaying
the anti-gods,
Bhīma killed one hundred and five
scampering Sūtas

27 With his uplifted tree. O lord of the world!
Then the valiant son of the wind-god
untied Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī and consoled her
(said Vaiśampāyana).

28 Draupadī, princess of Pāñcāla,
had tears streaming down her face.
She was numb after the ordeal.
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma said to her:

29 "Gentle lady, I have killed all
who dared insult you.
You need not fear any more.
Return now to the city.

30 I will find my own way
to the kitchens of Virāṭa."
The place was scattered
with one hundred and five corpses,
like a forest
littered with flattened trees.

[IV:23:31-32; 24:1-6]

31 One hundred and five kinsmen of Kīcaka
were slaughtered.
Counting the general,
that made one hundred and six.

32 That mind-boggling deed
awed the men and women
who gathered there.
They stood stunned, unable to speak.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

Transcreated by P. Lal

1 The citizens reported the corpses to the king,
saying:
"The gandharvas have killed
the mahā-powerful Sūta's sons.

2 They are lying on the face of the earth
like massive mountain-peaks
toppled by direct hits
from thunderbolts.

3 And the *sairandhrī* has been freed,
she is back in your city.
The city is now in peril,
O rājā.

4 The *sairandhrī* is exquisitely beautiful,
and the gandharvas mahā-powerful.
And everyone knows men lust
for lovely women.

5 Find out a way, O rājā.
to save your kingdom from being destroyed
by the harm done
to the *sairandhrī*."

6 Commander-of-large-armies Virāṭa
said to them:
"Complete the death-rites
of the slaughtered Sūtas.

7 Let all the Kīcaka kinsmen be cremated
in a single pyre;
let there be lavish offerings
of perfumes and gems."

8 The rājā was now afraid,
and he said to his queen Sudeṣṇā:
"When the *sairandhrī* comes,
tell her on my behalf,

9 '*Sairandhrī*, you are free to go where you like.
And may you prosper!
Lovely-thighed one,
the rājā fears the gandharvas.

10 He is afraid to speak to you in person,
because the gandharvas protect you.
He says this through me,
a harmless woman.' "

11 Untied by Bhīma after the slaughter
of the Sūtas
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī went to the city,

12 After washing her body and dress
in clean water.
She went like a tiger-terrified doe,
now free from fear.

13 O rājā! Seeing her,
the citizens fled helter-skelter,
afraid of the wrath of the gandharvas,
Some even shut their eyes.

14 O rājā! The princess of Pāñcāla
glimpsed Bhīma
standing at the kitchen gate
like a giant enraged elephant.

15 With admiring eyes she looked at him,
and quickly whispered:
"I namaskāra the gandharva rājā
who has freed me."

16 Bhīma replied: "All those who were here
obedient to you
will be pleased by your words,
and consider their debt discharged."

17 Draupadī saw mahā-muscled Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
in the dancing-hall
giving lessons to the daughters
of rājā Virāṭa.

18 They came out with Arjuna
from the dancing-hall
and saw innocent-yet-harassed Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
approaching. They laughed and said:

19 "You lucky girl, *sairandhrī*, you are free!
You are lucky to be back,
lucky the Sūtas who harmed you
are killed."

20 "Are you really free, *sairandhrī*?"
exclaimed Bṛhannalā.
"Are the vicious rascals really dead?
Tell me exactly what happened."

21 "Why, Bṛhannalā," replied Draupadī,
"how are you concerned about the *sairandhrī*?
You are happy enough
in the girls' apartments, you lucky girl.

22 What do you know about the sorrows
of the *sairandhrī*?
You must be joking.
You are making fun of my grief."

23 "Fortune-favoured lady," said Bṛhannalā,
"Bṛhannalā has griefs too, terrible ones,
She is fallen into the womb
of an animal.
You will not understand anything of this,
my good girl.

24 I have lived with you,
and you have lived with us.
Lovely-hipped lady, how can you say
I don't feel for you?

25 No one can look into the deepest places
of another's heart.
You don't know me,
you don't know what I feel."

26 Accompanied by the girls,
Draupadī entered the palace of Virāṭa
and stood
in front of queen Sudeṣṇā.

27 The queen repeated to her the words
of king Virāṭa:
"You are free, *sairandhrī*.
Go away quickly wherever you like.

28 Lovely-eye-browed one,
the king is afraid of the gandharvas.
You are young and graceful,
without equal in beauty;
you fascinate men; and the gandharvas
cannot tolerate this."

29 "Lovely queen," said Draupadī,
"permit me to stay here thirteen more days.
The gandharvas will remember
your kindness.

30 Then they will take me away,
and please you also.
The rājā and his friends will benefit
from this arrangement.

31 The rājā has greatly obliged the gandharvas,
and I know they are grateful.
They are strong
but they are noble,

32 And it is not their intention
to take revenge.
I am here for a reason.
I ask only for a few more days."

33 Sudeṣṇā heard Draupadī; she was horrified
by her brother's grisly death
but she controlled herself,
and said to Draupadī:

34 "Fortune-favoured lady,
you can stay for as long as you like.
Only ensure the safety of my husband
and my sons."

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 The killing of Kīcaka (said Vaiśampāyana)
filled foe-crushing rājā Virāṭa,
his *purohitas*, and the courtiers
with a profound gloom.

2 O lord of the world, the killing of Kīcaka
and his brothers
succeeded in filling people's minds
with horrified astonishment.

3 In the city and the surrounding murmured,
the subjects gathered and said,
"The rājā encouraged Kīcaka
because he was so powerful.

4 But he was a vicious-minded oppressor
he seduced soldiers' wives –
and that is why the gandharvas
killed wicked Kīcaka."

5 O mahārāja Janamejaya!
This talk circulated in many kingdoms
about the unsuppressable Kīcaka,
the slayer of his foes.

6 In the meantime,
spies engaged by Duryodhana,
the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
searched villages, cities, and provinces,

7 Under orders from him.
They infiltrated into every country
and returned to the capital
having accomplished their mission.

8 They approached the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the Kaurava rājā Duryodhana,
and Droṇa, Karṇa, Kṛpa
and mahātmā Bhīṣma,

9 His brothers and the mahā-chariot-heroes
called the Trigartas;
facing Duryodhana in his sabhā,
they said to him:

10 "O Indra-among-men!
We have used every means
to track down the Pāṇḍavas
in the massive forest,

11 The unaccessible forest
where wild animals roam,
and multitudes of trees, vines
and creepers flourish.

12 We were unable to find any trace
of their actual whereabouts:
there were no signs of any tracks
where they might be.

13 On the peaks of mountains, in caves,
in many territories,
in thickly-populated rural areas,
in camps and capitals,

14 We continued our probe, but,
O bull-brave Indra-among-men,
we got no information.
All signs suggest – the Pāṇḍavas are dead.

15 O best of chariot-heroes,
we followed every lead we could,
but this gave us no clue
about the Pāṇḍavas' whereabouts.

16 Finally, we managed to trace their charioteers,
O Indra-among-men.
We conducted an investigation,
and arrived at the truth.

17 O foe-slayer, O Indra-among-rājās,
the charioteers returned to Dvārakā
without the mahā-vowed Pāṇḍavas –
without Draupadī and the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī.

18 So we assume they are all dead.
O bull-brave Bharata, *namaste!*
We state that we have no information
about those mahātmās.

19 We know about their disposition
and have heard of their feats.
But that is all. Give us further orders,
O Indra-among-men, O lord-of-the world,

20 And instructions
should further search be required.
O great hero, listen also
to the following pleasing news –

21 Once the Trigartas
were repeatedly defeated
by the magnificently brave Kīcaka,
the Sūta of the Matsya rājā;

22 That wicked-ātmaned Sūta
and all his brothers
have been killed by invisible gandharvas
attacking at night.

23 The great Kīcaka
was rājā Virāṭa's brother-in-law and general.
He was Sudeṣṇā's elder brother,
fearless, brave,

24 Energetic, mahā-valiant,
a believer in traditional principles,
strong, skilled in military matters,
formidable as a lion.

25 Protector of people,
shrewd in ways of entrapping enemies,
mahā-victorious on the battlefield, quick to anger,
enormously confident,

26 Capable of imparting terror in the hearts
of men and women,
aggressive, patient, quick-witted.
He seduced a girl, and gandharvas

27 Slaughtered him and his brothers
in the middle of the night –
Some faithful soldiers
were also killed.

28 This is the good news that we bring
about the removal of an enemy.
We stand ready for further orders,
O Kaurava king."

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 Rājā Duryodhana gave careful thought
to their words
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said to his sabhā-members:

2 "It is very difficult
to arrive at any definite conclusion.
I must ask you
to locate the Pāṇḍavas.

3 They were supposed to be exiled
for thirteen years.
Thirteen years are nearly over;
only a few more days left.

4 If they really succeed in spending
the last few days
unknown to anyone,
they will have kept their pledge.

5 In righteous anger they will return
and trouble the Kauravas
like rutting intoxicated elephants
or like venomous snakes.

6 See that the clever Pāṇḍavas,
familiar with the seasons,
used to painful exile,
are forced again into forest-exile.

7 Make quick plans for all this,
because our kingdom
must be free from enemies and rivals
and would-be usurpers."

8 Karṇa said: "Descendant of Bharata,
send superior spies,
shrewder, more efficient, to do this,
properly disguised.

9 Send them to scour the kingdom
in all its provinces,
to heavily-populated areas, academies,
and monastic retreats,

10 To the inner apartments and *tīrthas*,
mines and other important places;
let them investigate
with the utmost thoroughness.

11 The Pāṇḍavas, who are disguised,
should be discovered by expert spies,
themselves disguised
and completely experienced;

12 Let them search the banks of rivers,
villages and places of pilgrimage,
cities and āshrams,
mountains and caves."

13 The younger brother Duḥśāsana, ill-motived,
delighted with Karṇa's suggestion,
said to his elder brother Duryodhana
these words:

14 "Lord of men, let us pay in advance
the spies in whom we have total trust,
and despatch them
on this mission.

15 What Karṇa has said, has my full approval.
Let spies be sent
to search all the places
that he has named.

16 Let these spies – and others too –
go to other lands as well.
I feel, however, that the Pāṇḍavas
will remain undetected.

17 They have surrounded themselves
in absolute secrecy;
perhaps they have crossed over
to the ocean's other side;
perhaps predators have devoured them
in the great forest;

18 Perhaps terrible natural calamity
has wiped them out.
Anyway, O excellent Kaurava,
do not let worries upset you.
Make the most of what you have,
give it your full attention."

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Droṇa, knower of truth and artha
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
said: "The Pāṇḍavas cannot be ruined
or frustrated.

2 A brave man, a learned man,
a self-disciplined man,
a man of dharma, a grateful man
is strict-vowed Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira –

3 The eldest, who follows dharma,
who knows all about artha and truth,
who is respected by his brothers
as a father;

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4 Indeed, all of them are obedient
to mahātmā Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
who has no enemies,
and is deeply devoted to his brothers.

5 Why shouldn't Yudhiṣṭhira,
who knows the secret of success,
know what is best
for such excellent mahātmā brothers?

6 That is why they are biding their time.
They can never be frustrated –
my commonsense tells me that
clearly.

7 Do not think –
act quickly and act decisively.
There is no time to lose –
immediacy is essential.

8 Decide on how the Pāṇḍavas
are to be accommodated;
the brave, faultless, self-disciplined Pāṇḍavas
cannot be detected.

9 Yudhiṣṭhira has a pure ātman,
he has all the virtues,
he is truth-speaking, far-seeing;
he can consume all with his radiant gaze.

10 Act on this knowledge. We should arrange
to send Brahmin spies
and noble-charactered men
to search for the Pāṇḍavas."

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 The grandfather of the Bharatas,
son-of-Śāntanu Bhīṣma,
wise in *śruti*, place, time, and truth,
proficient in all dharmas,

2 After the suggestion of acārya Droṇa,
gave it his approval,
and added the following
for the welfare of the Bharatas,

3 His words showing his preference
for dharma-wise Yudhiṣṭhira,
words that diṣhonest men deplore
and honest men appreciate.

4 Bhīṣma said these words
which all wise men value:
"Whatever the all-truth-knowing Brahmin
Droṇa says, I endorse.

5 They have all the auspicious marks,
they keep all the holy vows,
they are wise in *śruti*
and follow *śruti* principles,

6 They obey the instructions of their elders,
they are firm in the practice of truth,
they are pure,
they know what is opportune,

7 They are acquainted
with the dharma of the Kṣatriyas,
they are devotees of Keśava-Krishna,
they are mahā-powerful mahātmā heroes
who know the duties of good people –
the Pāṇḍavas cannot be overcome.

8 They know their dharma,
and are determined to fulfil it.
I am convinced of this –
the Pāṇḍavas cannot be overcome.

9 Those who are firm in their principles as they are
should not be spied upon by others.
Let me give you some advice,
O descendant of Bharata.

10 I have given this matter
my most serious thought,
and the advice I give you
is not intended to harm you.

11 What Yudhiṣṭhira does,
    is not for me to criticise.
His actions are good,
    they should be considered so.

12 *Tāta*, my child, the man who follows the advice
    of the elderly,
the truthful, and the serene,
    when speaking to an assembly,

13 Should always speak the truth
    for the sake of dharma.
I have different views from all
    who are present here

14 About Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's whereabouts
    in the thirteenth year of his exile.
Wherever rājā Yudhiṣṭhira is hiding out,
    tāta, my child,

15 Is a country whose cities and provinces
    are free from harm.
Wherever rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives,
    becomes a place
filled with kind, generous, humble
    and modest people.

16 The people of a place
    where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives
are disciplined, cheerful, healthy, industrious,
    and sweet-speaking.

17 The people of a place
    where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives
are not envious, malicious, or egoistic.
    They practise dharma.

18 They chant the songs of the Vedas,
    celebrate sacrifices with full libations,
and offer large *dakṣiṇās*
    to Brahmins.

19 The clouds in that country
    dispense generous showers;
the fear-free earth overflows
    with abundant harvests.

20 The paddyfields are full,
the fruits have delicious rasa,
the garlands are sweet-scented,
conversations are sweet-worded.

21 Where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives,
the breezes blow sweetly and happily,
the people are friendly,
none has cause to fear.

22 The cattle are plentiful,
and no cow is weak or thin;
milk, curd and ghee are delicious
and health-giving.

23 Where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives,
is a place
where the drinks are refreshing,
and the food palatable and nutritious.

24 Where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives,
rasa and smell and touch and hearing
are all refined –
the scenery everywhere enchanting.

25 Where he lives
in the thirteenth year of his exile,
dharma is studiously practised
by the learned twice-born.

26 *Tāta*, my child, the people of the country
where Yudhiṣṭhira lives
cannot but be cheerful,
contented, pure and unmolested.

27 They offer single-minded hospitality
to guests and gods,
and assiduously give charity,
and perform their various sva-dharmas.

28 Where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives,
people spontaneously
give up wrong-doing and cultivate goodness;
they perform sacrifices and take pure vows.

29 Where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lives,
people renounce lies,
and pursue what is truthful, auspicious and helpful.
Good cherishes good.

30 The people there perform sacrifices daily,
and abide by their strict vows.
My child, *tāta*,
Yudhiṣṭhira is a dharmātmā.

31 Even Brahmins don't have his qualities,
leave aside ordinary people –
truth, and fortitude, and patience,
intelligence and serenity,

32 Humility, prosperity, fame, energy, simplicity,
non-cruelty, universal compassion.
Where you find such signs,
you will also find Yudhiṣṭhira.
That is where he is hiding.
What more can I say?

33 O Kaurava,
think over what I have said to you,
and act quickly
if you have faith in my words."

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 Śaradvat's son Kṛpa spoke up next
(continued Vaiśampāyana):
"The words of elderly Bhīṣma are noble
and appropriate.

2 They agree with dharma and artha,
they are reasonable, spoken truthfully,
worthy of him; they deserve praise.
My own opinion is:

3 You should use every means to trace
the Pāṇḍavas' whereabouts
with the help of spies
in order to secure your safety.

4 *Tāta*! Child! Never ignore an enemy
when securing your own safety,
even an insignificant enemy.
The Pāṇḍavas are skilled war-experts.

5 When the time of the return
of the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
who are now hiding disguised in the forest,
draws near,

6 Keep a close account of the strength
of your kingdom and neighbouring kingdoms.
The Pāṇḍavas' return
is not far off.

7 When their exile ends,
the mahā-powerful, mahā-confident sons
of Pṛthā-Kuntī, incomparably brave,
will radiate tremendous energy.

8 So look to your treasury
and strengthen your armed forces.
Sign an advantageous treaty with the Pāṇḍavas,
when they return.

9 Keep all this well in mind, *tāta*, my child.
Know your strength,
and know the strength
of your weak and powerful allies.

10 Find out which of your forces are weak,
which inefficient and indifferent,
which satisfied and which discontented,
and plan accordingly.

11 Conciliation, persuasion by gift-giving,
fomenting disunion,
strict punishment, bribes, fairness –
are ways of weakening enemies;

12 As for allies – please them and your own soldiers
with sweet words.
With a strong army and a strong treasury,
you are safe.

13 That will enable you to rout
even the most powerful aggressors;
so why worry about the Pāṇḍavas,
who have few soldiers and war-vehicles?

14 Follow your sva-dharma
and ensure that all this is done:
then, O Indra-among-men,
you will have long-lasting happiness."

15 Duryodhana listened carefully to the advice
of all these mahātmās,
pondered for a while,
and said to them:

16 "Long ago, in assemblies of common men
and those learned in the *śāstras,*
from heroes and wise ones,
I heard similar words.

17 And I gained insights into behaviour
as a result.
At present there are, in truth, strength,
patience and handsomeness,

18 Only four men who,
from all in the realms of humans,
rākṣasas and Daitya-antigods.
equal glorious Śakra-Indra himself.

19 They are the most excellent of men.
None equals them in bravery.
They possess equal strength,
these all-powerful warriors.

20 They are – Baladeva-Balarāma, Bhīma,
the rājā of Madra named Śalya, and Kīcaka,
I know of no fifth man
to rival them.

21 They have always struggled to establish
undisputed supremacy among themselves.
They are profoundly jealous
of each other.

22 Nothing pleases them more
than a chance to fight with fists.
This is how I intend to discover
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma's whereabouts.

23 I am convinced that the Pāṇḍavas
are very much alive.
I have heard rumours
that Bhīma killed Kīcaka.

24 I suspect Draupadī is the *sairandhrī*.
No need to argue over this.
I suspect Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī got Kīcaka killed
by mahā-powerful

25 Bhīma, disguised as a gandharva
striking at dead of night.
Who else could have killed Kīcaka
but Bhīma,

26 Bare-handed, without any weapons,
pummelling Kīcaka's body
into a shapeless pulp,
and then rolling it into a ball?

27 There seems little doubt
that Bhīma disguised himself
and, on Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's bidding,
slaughtered the Sūtas at night,

28 Most probably in the pose of a gandharva –
no doubt of this.
What our grandfather Bhīṣma has said
about the glories

29 And virtues of Yudhiṣṭhira, are glories and virtues
reported to me about a certain man –
certainly the Pāṇḍava –
living in Virāṭa's city,

30 An enchanting city
which it will profit us to visit.
Let us attack and destroy
the cattle-riches of Virāṭa.

31 The Pāṇḍavas will be obliged to come
to his rescue.
If we expose them before the expiry
of the term of exile,

32 They will be forced
into another twelve years of exile.
Success in even one of these two aims
is well worth having.

33 The cattle will add to our wealth,
and our enemies will be disposed of.
'What Yudhiṣṭhira protects,
can Suyodhana-Duryodhana destroy?' –

34 I remember these were the words
the king of Matsya used once.
Let us resolve to attack Virāṭa
immediately.
I am confident that my plan will meet
with your approval."

SECTION THIRTY

1 The rājā of Trigarta named Suśarmā
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
a powerful ruler who controlled many chariots,
spoke up:

2 "*Prabhu*! Lord! I have been defeated
time and again
by the Sūta of Matsya, Kīcaka,
and by the forces of Śālva.

3 Powerful lord, I and my relatives
have been repeatedly humiliated."
He said this
glancing at Karṇa and Duryodhana.

4 "The rājā of Matsya has repeatedly
invaded my kingdom
and humbled my soldiers,
assisted by his general Kīcaka.

5 That wicked-ātmaned, atrocity-perpetrating general
whose ill-fame
spread all over the world,
has been killed by gandharvas.

6 With him dead, rājā Virāṭa is left
without any protector.
His confidence is sapped, his pride dimmed,
he is defenceless.

7 O faultless one, if this pleases you
and the Kauravas,
including mahātmā Karṇa,
I suggest we attack at once.

8 This opportunity comes
as an unexpected benefit to us.
Let us go now and annex
his corn-abundant kingdom.

9 Let us appropriate all his jewels
and other wealth,
and divide his villages and provinces
among ourselves.

10 Let us plan a determined assault
and make off
with his thousands of magnificent cattle
of all kinds.

11 O lord of the world!
Let us join the Kauravas and the Trigartas,
and carry off all the countless herds
of cattle.

12 Let us attack together,
and unman his manly glory;
let us wipe out his army,
and make him our captive.

13 Once he is legally under our control,
we can continue to live peacefully;
and our strength will grow
from more to more."

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14 Karṇa heard this plan,
and said to rājā Duryodhana:
"Suśarmā speaks well.
This is a good chance for us.

15 O faultless one, if you approve,
we will take immediate steps
to unite our forces
and marshal them in ranks.

16 Or let us seek the advice
of the wise Kaurava elders –
grandfather Bhīṣma, ācārya Droṇa,
and Śaradvat's son Kṛpa.

17 Let us decide and act,
instead of wasting time,
for the Pāṇḍavas no more have wealth,
army, and confidence.

18 They have gone into hiding for ever,
or, more likely,
they have gone to the realm of Yama,
the god of death.
Let us fearlessly attack,
and collect wealth and cattle."

19 Rājā Duryodhana agreed to the plan of Karṇa,
the son of the Sun
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and turning

20 To his younger brother Duḥśāsana,
who always obeyed him,
he said: "Consult the elders,
and get an army readied.

21 We will march with the Kaurava forces
as planned,
Suśarmā, the mahā chariot-warrior,
will follow his plan
and march with the Trigartas – in secret –
against the kingdom of Virāṭa.

22 Suśarmā will attack first –
we will launch, next day,
a full and massive offensive
against the kingdom of Matsya.

23 Let him proceed without delay
and march on the city of Virāṭa,
his objective two-fold:
cattle and wealth.

24 Next day we will launch
a two-pronged strike,
and carry off thousands of excellent cattle
of all breeds."

25 Impelled by their desire for revenge,
the chariot-warrior heroes of the Trigartas,
supported by foot-soldiers,
moved south-east

26 Against the kingdom of Virāṭa
in order to loot the cattle.
Suśarmā's march started
during the month's dark half.

27 On the eighth day of the dark fortnight, O rājā,
the Kauravas also,
leading their army, began looting cattle
in their thousands.

SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 Mahārāja (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
of illimitable prowess,
succeeded in remaining undetected

2 During the last year
of their exile
in the magnificent city
of king Virāṭa of Matsya.

3 The foe-exterminating rājā Virāṭa,
after Kīcaka's death,
placed high hopes
in the son of Kuntī, Yudhiṣṭhira.

4 It was towards the end of the thirteenth year,
O Bharata descendant,
that Suśarmā launched his offensive
to loot the cattle.

5 There was a mahā-commotion:
conches and *dundubhi*-drums sounded,
dust obscured the sky,
the capital reverberated.

6 Oxen, horses, chariots, elephants
and shouting soldiers
added to the confusion when Matsya was attacked
for its cattle-wealth.

7 The cattle-guards tried in vain
to stop the pillaging Trigartas.
The invading soldiers succeeded in amassing
vast wealth,

8 And deployed cavalry and chariots
against the cowherds;
proclaiming loud screams of victory,
they harassed

9 The cattle-guards and started massacring them
with spears and swords.
The guards retaliated with a massive barrage
of clubs, *bhindipāla*-slicers, *mudgara*-mallets,
and *paraśu*-axes hurled
at the charging cavalry,

10 Including a remarkable weapon
known as the *karṣaṇa*.
Temporarily repulsed,
the Trigartas from their chariots

11 Released a blinding stream of sharp arrows
at the cattle-guards.
A powerful guard, Gopa,
sporting earrings, rushed in his chariot

12 To the city where the rājā of Matsya sat
adorned with glittering earrings,
along with courtiers
also wearing earrings, and bracelets,
and the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
all reclining in the palace

13 Sabhā of mahārāja Virāṭa;
he approached the king,
who was surrounded by all his ministers,
and said:

14 "The Trigartas have routed us and our kinsmen
in battle;
they are making off
with thousands of your cattle.

15 O Indra-among-rājās!
Save them before all is lost!"
The king immediately marshalled
the Matsya army,

16 Which consisted of chariots, elephants, horses,
foot-soldiers, with flags unfurled.
The rājās and princes
put on their war-armours,

17 Brilliantly dazzling,
worthy of the finest of battle-heroes.
A gold-plated, gem-studded-coat-of mail
was worn

18 By Virāṭa's brother Śatānīka,
whom he loved dearly.
A gold-plated, immune-to-penetration armour
was worn

19 By Madirākṣa,
younger brother of Śatānīka.
A hundred-sun-adorned, hundred-circled,
hundred-dotted and hundred-eyed.

20 Armour was worn
by the rājā of Matsya himself;
it was decorated
with a hundred carved *saugandhika* lotuses.

[IV:31:21-29]

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21 Sūryadatta, a general of Virāṭa,
wore armout that shone like the sun.
A pure-white, impenetrable
hundred-eyed armour

22 Was worn by Virāṭa's eldest son,
heroic Śaṅkha.
In this way hundreds of handsome
mahā-chariot-heroes

23 And god-like warriors, brandishing weapons,
showed off their armour.
These mahā-chariot-heroes yoked horses
to white chariots,

24 And stood ready, armour-clad.
The sun-and-moon-radiant
divinely-glowing golden chariot
of the king of the land

25 Of the Matsyas had a magnificent flag
fluttering on it.
Fixing flags on their golden chariots
of all sizes and shapes

26 Were the other brave Kṣatriya heroes.
As the chariots rattled past,
Kaṅka said
to the rājā of Matsya:

27 "I picked up the fourfold science of bowcraft
from a ṛṣi.
I too will wear armour
and fight!

28 Your palace cook, Ballava,
looks like a man capable of fighting,
as do the horse-trainer
and cow-keeper.

29 Place them in war-chariots, O rājā.
I am convinced
they will gladly fight today."
Virāṭa said to Śatānīka:

30 "It seems that Kaṅka, Ballava,
the keeper of my cows,
and tremendously heroic Granthika
are determined to fight.

31 Supply them beflagged chariots
and provide them different kinds of armour –
armour that is invulnerable
and conveniently worn.

32 See that they are equipped for battle.
Give them all the weapons needed.
These heroes have arms
like elephant-trunks –

33 I will not believe that they are incapable
of fighting."
Śatānīka heard these words of the king,
who was himself
preparing for battle,
and ordered that chariots be brought

34 For Sahadeva, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma and Nakula.
The heroes climbed into the chariots speedily;
they were happy,
and had the welfare of rājā Virāṭa
in mind.

35 The splendid, easy-to-wear, flexible armours
provided by lord-of-men Virāṭa
for these indefatigable heroes
were quickly put on

36 By the foe-extirpators.
Climbing into the chariots
pulled by excellent horses,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons galloped out.

37 They were all mahā-chariot-horses,
they drove with great enthusiasm,
still maintaining
their disguises.

38 The four Pāṇḍava brothers,
all bull-brave Kaurava heroes,
all truth-speaking heroes,
drove their chariots behind that of Virāṭa.

39 They lifted their long and massive bows
and pulled the strings tight.
Dressed in lavish,
colourful robes,

40 With sandal-paste smeared on their heads,
they waited
for Virāṭa's signal
before releasing their horses' reins.

41 Balancing expertly in their chariots,
they drove off,
pulled by golden horses
that flew like swift birds.

42 Following were magnificent elephants
whose temples flowed with ichor –
sixty-year old tuskers,
streaming juice like rain,

43 Driven by trained riders,
all expert in the arts of war.
They trailed behind rājā Virāṭa
like innumerable moving mountains.

44 The foremost heroes of the Matsyas
joyfully followed the king
in eight thousand chariots, a thousand elephants,
and sixty thousand horses.

45 O bull-brave Bharata!
The army of king Virāṭa
marching out in hundreds of thousands
enchanted the eyes.

46 O rājā Janamejaya! It followed the hoof-prints
of the stolen cattle.
Virāṭa's massive army
of variously-armed soldiers,
consisting of elephants, horses, and chariots,
was an awesome sight.

SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 Emerging from the capital,
    the foe-chastising Matsyas
formed battle ranks and faced the Trigartas
    in the afternoon.

2 The mahā-powerful Trigartas and Matsyaṣ
    were roused to aggressive pitch;
they screamed fiercely;
    both wanted the cattle.

3 Massive musth elephants,
    driven by expert drivers of both sides,
were prodded onward
    by *tomara*-spikes and hooks.

4 O rājā! The battle between the elephants of the armies,
    a horripilating spectacle
with the drivers hurling weapons,
    increased the population of Yama's kingdom.

5 The sun was setting
    as the elephants and cavalry clashed, O rājā,
in an encounter resembling the battle
    of gods with anti-gods.

6 The soldiers rushed at each other,
    killing indiscriminately.
A dense pall of dust
    seemed to obscure everything.

7 Dust-blinded birds dropped from the sky,
    and the sun itself
was hidden
    behind a cloud of arrows.

8 The sky lit up with flaming arrows
    as if with fireflies.
Swiftly shifting golden-feathered bows
    from one hand to the other,

9 The warriors shot arrows right and left,
    cutting down enemies.
Chariots grappled with chariots,
    foot-soldiers fought foot-soldiers,

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10 Cavalry singled out cavalry
and mahā-elephants charged at mahā-elephants.
Brandishing swords, axes, feathered darts,
javelins, steel clubs,

11 The infuriated soldiers declimated each other
in the battle.
The magnificent heroes kept attacking
with renewed energy,

12 But none succeeded in achieving
total control over the other.
Severed heads rolled; noses intact,
but lips sliced;

13 Ear-ringed heads with glossy hair
lay covered with dust.
Magnificent Kṣatriya heroes,
like trunks of *śāla*-trees,

14 Had their limbs cut off
and scattered on the ground
that was littered with sandalpaste-smeared arms
(like snake-lengths)

15 And ear-ringed heads;
the battlefield glowed with an eerie beauty.
The charioteers renewed their challenge
against their counterparts,

16 The cavalry against theirs, and foot-soldiers
grappled with other foot-soldiers.
Streams of blood thickened
the fearful dust.

17 Some soldiers felt sick and faint,
but they fought on blindly.
Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
assisted by his brothers,
adopted the *vyūha* formation
to protect king Virāṭa.

18 He employed the tactice of the vulture,
himself the beak,
the twins the two wings,
and wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma the tail.

19 Yudhiṣṭhira, the son of Kuntī,
wiped out a thousand soldiers.
Bhīma, armed with all varieties of weapons,
furiously

20 Despatched two thousand chariot-heroes
to the other world.
Nakula killed three hundred,
and Sahadeva four hundred.

21 Oppressed by the heat and dust of battle,
winged creatures
fell from the sky,
blinded by the showers of arrows.

22 Each side tried desperately to overcome the other,
but failed.
Warriors could not even see
who they were fighting against.

23 Śatānīka killed a hundred,
Madirākṣa four hundred;
both these mahā-chariot-heroes drove a wedge
inside the Trigarta ranks;

24 Penetrating enemies' forces,
the two-chariot-heroes confounded their foes,
engaging in hand-to-hand
hair-pulling encounters.

25 Next they forced entry into the ranks
of the chariots of the Trigartas.
Śatānīka attacked the front,
Madirākṣa the rear.

26 The magnificent chariot-hero rājā Virāṭa
destroyed five hundred chariots,
eight hundred cavalry,
and five mahā-chariot-warriors,

27 By a brilliant display of strategic ruses.
His next objective
was golden-charioted Suśarmā himself,
the Trigarta king.

28 The two mahā-powerful mahātmā heroes
clashed headlong,
roaring and screaming like two bulls
in a grazing ground.

29 Intoxicated by battle-fever,
the rājā of the Trigartas, Suśarmā
challenged bull-brave rājā Virāṭa
to open duel on a chariot.

30 Livid with anger, the two chariot-warriors
drove down on each other,
firing arrows
like two rain-clouds clashing.

31 Filled with hate, the weapons-skilled heroes
waited for an opening,
brandishing sharp arrows, swords,
and massive maces.

32 Rājā Virāṭa shrewdly wounded Suśarmā
with ten arrows,
and wounded Suśarmā's four horses also
with five arrows each.

33 Irrepressible-in-war Suśarmā,
skilled in special weapons,
wounded the king of Matsya
with fifty sharp arrows.

34 O mahārāja Janamejaya!
The swirls of dust on the battlefield
made it impossible for Suśarmā and Virāṭa
to identify each other.

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 O descendant of Bharata,
so much dust and darkness blurred the earth
that both armies broke ranks
and stopped fighting.

2 Then the dark-dispelling moon rose,
and soft light pierced the night,
to the delight
of the warring Kṣatriyas.

3 The battle recommenced
with the fresh emergence of objects;
and once again the fearful dust
seemed to obscure everything.

4 Suśarmā, king of the Trigartas,
assisted by the chariots
of his younger brother,
attacked the rājā of Matsya.

5 Alighting from their chariots, the two brothers,
both bull-brave Kṣatriyas,
furiously brandishing maces,
rushed at the enemy.

6 The two brothers fought
like two maddened bulls,
like rutting elephants, like lions,
like Sakra-Indra and Vṛtra.

7 The battle-scarred armies kept pounding
at each other
with maces, swords, scimitars, axes,
nooses and sharp darts.

8 Both were equally strong and confident,
both skilled in all war-weapons,
both expert
in military strategy.

9 Rājā Suśarmā,
king of Trigarta,
defeated the army
of Matsya, and launched
a savage attack
on Virāṭa himself.

10 He slaughtered Virāṭa's two horses
and his charioteer
and personal guards,
and took the Matsya rājā prisoner.

[IV:33:11-19]

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11 Suśarmā attacked like a kāma-obsessed rapist
assaulting a girl;
he pushed Virāṭa into his chariot,
and drove away.

12 Seeing chariotless Virāṭa taken prisoner,
the Matsyas,
under severe pressure from the Tṛigartas,
fled in all directions.

13 Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī,
saw them scatter in fear,
and said to mahā-muscled slayer-of-enemies
Bhīma:

14 "The Matsya-rājā is now a captive
of Suśarmā of the Trigartas.
O mahā-muscled one,
free him from his oppressors.

15 We have passed our days contentedly in his palace,
and received his pūjā-respect.
It is your duty, Bhīma,
to pay back the debt we owe him."

16 Bhīma replied: "I will obey you
and set him free.
Watch me as I move forward
to rout my enemies!

17 Step to one side with your brothers,
and observe, O rājā,
how I employ my strength and weapons
to crush them!

18 Watch me uproot this massive tree
that looks like an elephant's trunk,
and wield it like a mace
against my enemies."

19 Yudhiṣṭhira saw his brother eyeing the tree
like a wild elephant;
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Vaiśampāyana)
told his brave brother:

20 "Don't be reckless, Bhīma!
Leave the tree alone!
You must not go about
displaying your superhuman strength.

21 They will spot you immediately –
'That is Bhīma!'
O descendant of Bharata,
find some other weapons,

22 Such as a bow, or dart, or sword,
or even a battle-axe.
Bhīma! Take a weapon humans use,
so that you remain undetected,

23 And with it go and free the king.
Your mahā-powerful twin brothers
will cover the left and right flanks
of your chariot;

24 Together you will set free
the rājā of Matsya."
Taking this advice,
mahā-powerful and swift Bhīma

25 Lifted a magnificent bow,
the finest available,
and shot a swarm of rain-like arrows
at Suśarmā.

26 Bhīma singled out Suśarmā,
famed for his terrifying prowess.
He glanced at Virāṭa and shouted to Suśarmā,
"Stop! Stop!"

27 Suśarmā looked back;
the bull-brave chariot hero saw Bhīma
bearing down on him shouting
"Stop! Stop!
Watch my prowess!" –
like Kāla, like Antaka-Yama, like doom.

28 Suśarmā paused, reflected, then,
lifting his bow,
he turned back, along with his brothers.
Bhīma destroyed his chariots.

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29 In a flash; then the son of Pāṇḍu, Bhīma,
laid waste
chariots, elephants, cavalry
and a hundred thousand soldiers.

30 Mahātmā Bhīma slaughtered all those soldiers
singlehanded.
Bhīma performed this feat
in front of Virāṭa's eyes.

31 Irrepressible-in-battle Suśarmā
saw this awesome feat
and thought : *My army is finished*).
I see my brother
sinking with his soldiers
in this ocean of war.

32 Suśarmā pulled his bow taut
right up to his ear,
and retreated in a volley
of fierce defensive arrows.

33 The whole army,
under cover of the charging chariots,
kept up a continuous pressure
on the retreating Trigartas.

34 The sight of the Pāṇḍavas moving
to the battlefield
inspired the soldiers.
Virāṭa's son Śveta fought magnificently.

35 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
killed a thousand soldiers by himself;
Bhīma despatched seven thousand
to the realm of Yama.

36 The arrows of Nakula
killed seven hundred,
and Sahadeva was responsible for the deaths
of three hundred;

37 Ordered by Yudhiṣṭhira,
that bull-among-men, bow in hand,
fearful in his anger,
Sahadeva next attacked Suśarmā,

38 After decimating his Trigarta forces.
The mahā chariot-warrior,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
with a burst of enthusiasm,

39 Hemmed Suśarmā in
with a barrage of sharp arrows.
Suśarmā, enraged by the effrontery
of Yudhiṣṭhira,

40 Immediately countered with nine arrows,
pinning down Yudhiṣṭhira, and his four horses.
The agile son of Kuntī,
wolf-waisted Bhīma

41 Rushed to the scene,
and attacked the horses of Suśarmā.
He slaughtered the rear-guards
with unique arrows,

42 And furiously felled Suśarmā's charioteer
on the ground.
The brave protector-of-wheels,
the famed hero Madirākṣa,

43 Saw the Trigarta king unchirioted,
and rushed there.
Virāṭa jumped free from the chariot
of Suśarmā,

44 Bravely picked up Suśarmā's mace
and charged at him.
An old man, he moved nonetheless
like a nimble youth.

45 Seeing the king of Trigarta running away,
Bhīma shouted:
"Stop, prince!
You have no right to flee the field!

46 Was this the valour
that made you steal the cattle?
Abandoning your followers,
and running from your enemies?"

47 Mocked by Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
powerful Suśarmā, lord of chariots,
turned and suddenly pounced on Bhīma,
shouting, "Stop! Stop!"

48 Alighting from his chariot,
valiant Bhīma, son of Pāṇḍu,
calmly waited for Suśarmā,
determined to take his life.

49 Even as the king of Trigarta
bore down upon him,
brave Bhīma jumped,
like a lion on a young deer.

50 He held Suśarmā by the hair,
and bodily lifted him
from the ground,
and then hurled him down violently.

51 He banged his foot
on the head of the moaning
Suśarmā and kicked
with his knee on the chest
of the rājā, who lay
flat on the ground.

52 The kick knocked Suśarmā unconscious.
With the king of the Trigartas,
the mahā-chariot-hero,
unchárioted and made captive,
the Trigarta defence disintegrated,
the army was fear-filled.

53 The chariot-heroes, the Pāṇḍavas,
recovered all the cattle,
and humbled Suśarmā.
They appropriated all his wealth.

54 The self-sufficient Pāṇḍavas,
self-effacing and vow-observing, mahātmās,
removers of the sorrows
of the king of Matsya,

55 Stood facing him.
Bhīma said to the king of Matsya:
"This vicious scoundrel does not deserve
to be freed by me.
But what can I do?
The rājā is forgiving."

56 He gripped unconscious Suśarmā's neck,
pulled him up,
and trussed his limp captive.
Wolf-waisted Bhīma

57 Dragged the dust-covered, feelingless prisoner
to a chariot.
He went to Yudhiṣṭhira
in the middle of the battlefield,

58 And displayed the captive
to his eldest brother Yudhiṣṭhira.
That tiger-among-men
said to battle-radiant Bhīma,

59 Smiling as he spoke,
"Free this scoundrel."
Now it was Bhīma's turn to speak
to mahā-powerful Suśarmā:

60 "If you want to live, you fool,
listen to me.
Announce in courts and sabhās
that you are our slave.

61 I grant you freedom on that condition –
this is the custom among the victorious."
Bhīma's elder brother Yudhiṣṭhira
said gently:

62 "If you have any regard for me,
set him free.
He is already slave to Virāṭa."
Then, to Suśarmā:
"You are not our slave.
Go. But never do this again."

SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 Suśarmā, ashamed, lowered his head
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
Set free, he bowed to rājā Virāṭa
and left.

2 After freeing Suśarmā,
the foe-free sons of Pāṇḍu,
self-confidently powerful, strict in vows,
and devoted to self-effacement,

3 Passed that night peacefully
on the field of battle.
Virāṭa honoured,
with offerings of respect and wealth,
the mahā-chariot-heroes,
who possessed more-than-human powers.

4 "All my wealth, all my jewels,"
said Virāṭa,
"are yours too. Work with me
and live here happily.

5 Foe-crushing heroes,
I will give you ornamented girls,
all manner of wealth,
and whatever else pleases you.

6 Your assistance today has saved me
from disaster.
I am unassailably victorious.
I will make you lords of Matsya."

7 Each of the Kauravas, led by Yudhiṣṭhira,
did *añjali* before the king of Matsya
who honoured them,
and they said:

8 "O lord of the world!
Your words are reward enough for us;
what pleases us
is that you have been rid of enemies."

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9 Mahā-muscled Virāṭa, rājā of the Matsyas,
excellent monarch,
was delighted,
and he said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

10 "I will instal you our king,
the rājā of Matsya!
Whatever is hard to obtain,
anything you desire –
ask for it, and I will see
that it is yours.

11 Ask for gold, jewels, gems, pearls
O tiger-brave Indra-among Brahmins,
cattle, diamonds – and it is yours.
Namo'astu te!

12 It is you who made it possible for me
to ensure the prosperity
of my kingdom and my children.
I was afraid, and you freed me."

13 Hearing Virāṭa's words, Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"You speak sweet words, O Matsya.
I cherish the sentiments
inside your words.

14 May you live and rule happily
from this day."
Rājā Virāṭa heard Kaṅka say this,
and repeated

15 His words: "Incredible were the feats
of Ballava the cook.
Ballava saved me from disaster
in the battle today.

16 And all this was because of you.
May you prosper, O faultless one!
Ask a boon from me.
Let me know how to serve you.

17 It will give me the greatest pleasure
to offer you
the finest jewels, beds, cushions, vehicles,
dresses, lovely ornamented girls,

18 Elephants, horses, chariots,
and all the soldiers you desire.
Noble-vowed one, allow me the pleasure
to give you pleasure."

19 To the king who spoke so graciously,
Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"That you escaped from captivity,
is pleasure enough.

20 Enter your palace without fear
and with royal glory;
be happy with your wife and children.
Pleasure enough for us.

21 Send messengers immediately to the capital
with the sweet news of your victory
to increase the joy
of your friends."

22 Rājā Virāṭa did as advised;
to his messengers he said:
"Go and announce
my victory!
Let ornamented girls
receive us

23 At the city gates with music playing
from many instruments."
Ordered by the rājā of Matsya,
the delighted messengers,
placing his command on their head,
rushed to the city.

24 They reached the city the same night.
Early in the morning,
as the sun rose,
they announced the victory of Virāṭa.

19 Humble the Kauravas on the battlefield,
as thunder-wielding Vajrapāṇi-Indra
routed the anti-gods,
and return triumphant to your city.

20 You are the Matsya king's son,
the chief support of the kingdom,
as Arjuna is the foremost
of Pāṇḍu's sons.

21 Like him, you are the refuge
of all the people of the country –
they turn to you for help
in their distress."

22 Uttara listened to these fear-dispelling words,
surrounded by the women
of the inner apartments,
and launched into this praise of himself:

SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 "I am an expert in the use of the bow.
I will go
and bring back the cattle,
if I find a skilled charioteer.

2 I cannot think of anyone
who can be my charioteer.
Go, find one who will suit me,
for I am ready.

3 In the last battle I fought –
that lasted twenty-eight-days,
or was it a month? –
my charioteer was killed.

4 I will leave, with my flag hoisted,
the moment anyone
can find me a charioteer
expert in chariot-combat.

[IV:36:5-13]

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5 I will pierce the Kauravas' ranks
of elephants, horses and chariots,
rout them,
and return with all our cattle.

6 Duryodhana, Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Sūrya's son Karṇa, Kṛpa and Droṇa,
and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
and other mahā-bowmen –

7 I will strike fear in them all,
as Vajrabhṛt-Indra struck fear with his thunderbolt
among the Dānava anti-gods,
and I will recover the cattle.

8 No one is there to stop the Kauravas
from robbing our cattle.
What can I do from here?
I have to be there in person.

9 But the gang of Kauravas will today
see my war-skill, and wonder:
Is it Pārtha-Arjuna himself
battling against us?"

10 Listening to the rājā's son say this,
all-informed Arjuna
in private happily
said to his beloved faultless wife,

11 Draupadī, princess of Pāñcāla,
slim-waisted yajña-born daughter of Drupada,
truth-speaking, virtue-filled
and husband-devoted lady:

12 "Fortune-favoured lady, quickly go to Uttara –
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
I want this done urgently –
and tell him this:

13 'Bṛhannalā used to be the trusted
and favourite charioteer of Arjuna.
A veteran of many mahā-wars,
he will serve as your charioteer'."

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 While the king of Matsya was pursuing the Trigartas
to recover his cattle,
Duryodhana and his courtiers
attacked Virāṭa's kingdom.

2 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, skilled-in-all-weapons' Kṛpa,
Aśvatthāman, Subala's son Śakuni, and Duḥśāsana,

3 Vivimśati, Vikarṇa, heroic Citrasena,
Durmukha, Duḥśaha, and other mahā-chariot-heroes

4 Marched into Virāṭa's kingdom Matsya,
created confusion in the cow-grounds,
and forcibly claimed
his wealth of cattle.

5 The Kauravas surrounded the area
with a huge force of chariots,
and drove off
with sixty thousand cattle.

6 The oppressed cowherds began shouting
at the top of their voices,
as the mahā-chariot-warriors mercilessly attacked
their grazing areas.

7 The terror-stricken leader of the cowherds
ran up screaming into a chariot
and drove off
in the direction of the capital,

8 Entering the rājā's city,
he went straight to the palace;
alighting from his chariot,
he stammered out the story.

9 He approached Virāṭa's self-centred son Uttara,
also known as Bhumiñjaya,
and described the robbery
of the royal cattle.

[IV:35:10:18]

Transcreated by P. Lal

10 "The Kauravas are running away
with sixty thousand cattle of the king,
Rise, sire!
O kingdom-enhancer, win them back!

11 O Prince! If you desire the welfare
of the kingdom,
march forth in person!
The king left you to guard the land.

12 He always praises you in court
saying, 'My son is like me,
the heroic protector
of the royal dynasty.

13 He is the bravest of warriors,
expert in the use of bow and arrow.'
Prove the truth of the words
of that Indra-among-men.

14 O greatest of cattle-owners!
Frustrate the vandalising Kauravas,
recover your cattle, destroy their soldiers
with your arrows,

15 Snuff out the lives of your enemies
with your gold-feathered deadly arrows
shot from your bow
like tusker-leaders charging,

16 Your bow is a mahā-sonorous vīṇā;
its two ends, ivory cushions;
its string, the main chord;
its staff, the fingerboard;
its arrows, the melody.
Play this bow-vīṇā among your enemies.

17 Yoke your silver-white horses
to your chariot.
Prabhu! Lord! Raise your flag
with its golden lion emblem!

18 Fire your gold-feathered arrows
with your strong arms
to block off the sun
and intercept the marauding rājās.

14 Pāñcālī-Draupadī found it impossible to tolerate
the comparisons Uttara was making
before all the women between himself
and dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

15 The tapasyā-disciplined lady
rose from the group of women
and in a low voice, gently,
said these words:

16 "This handsome young person,
as majestic as an elephant,
known as Bṛhannalā, was once the charioteer
of Pārtha-Arjuna.

17 He was a great archer,
the disciple of mahātmā Arjuna.
I saw him once
when I served the Pāṇḍava brothers.

18 When fire devoured the Khāṇḍava mahā-forest,
he took charge
of the magnificent horses of Arjuna,
and helped him.

19 With him as charioteer,
Pārtha-Arjuna succeeded in overcoming
all the creatures of Khāṇḍava.
There is no charioteer like him."

20 "*Sairandhrī*," said Uttara,
"how can a eunuch
display such ability?
You know it better, good lady,
than I – but do not
expect me to ask him."

21 "Brave one," said Draupadī,
"he will certainly listen
to whatever your lovely-hipped younger sister
tells him.

22 And if he agrees to be your charioteer,
you can be sure
that you will rout the Kauravas
and recover your cattle."

23 Keeping Sairandhrī's words in mind,
Uttara said to his sister Uttarā:
"Lovely-limbed sister,
fetch Bṛhannalā here."

24 Asked by her brother,
she hurried to the dancing hall
where the mahā-muscled son of Pāṇḍu,
Arjuna, disguised, was waiting.

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Advised by her brother,
the *vedi*-waisted beauty,
lotus-lovely like Lakṣmī,
adorned with the plumes
of a peacock, and always
shy and obedient,

2 With a girdle of pearls
circling her waist,
with curved eyelashes,
supremely graceful,
sped like lightning
to a dark cloud-mass.

3 The youthful beauty
had exquisite teeth;
her thighs were shaped
like an elephant's trunk;
they touched each other;
wearing a garland,
she ran towards Arjuna
as a she-elephant runs
to a great tusker.

4 The radiantly lovely
and large-eyed daughter,
the gem of Virāṭa,
the Lakṣmī of Indra,
frontally enchanting,
spoke sweetly to Arjuna.

5 And Arjuna then questioned
the tight-thighed princess
of golden complexion:
"Gold-garlanded princess,
doe-eyed beauty,
where are you hurrying?
Why is your face
sad-seeming? Tell me,
O exquisite lady."

6 Seeing his loved-and-loving *sakhī*,
the large-eyed princess, looking depressed, O rājā,
Arjuna smiled and asked her the reason
for her low spirits.

7 The princess approached that bull-among men
and surrounded
by her *sakhīs*,
lovingly said to Arjuna:

8 "Bṛhannalā, the cattle of my father
are being robbed by the Kauravas.
My brother, armed with a bow,
is soon marching out.

9 Some days ago his charioteer was killed
in a battle,
and he can find no one
to take the charioteer's place.

10 Bṛhannalā, he mentioned this
in front of the *sairandhrī*,
and she said you were an expert
in the ways of horses,

11 And that you used to be the charioteer
of bull-brave Pāṇḍava Arjuna,
whom you helped conquer the earth.
This is what she said.

12 Our cattle have been taken far away
by the Kauravas.
O Bṛhannalā, I beg of you –
please help my brother!

13 I ask you this with love.
If today you refuse to help
as I have asked you,
I will certainly commit suicide."

14 At the request of his lovely-hipped *sakhī*,
the foe-punishing hero Arjuna
of illimitable prowess
rushed to the prince.

15 The large-eyed princess kept pace
with his swift steps,
following him as a she-elephant follows
a rutting herd-leader.

16 The prince saw him coming and shouted:
"With you as charioteer,
Kuntī's son Arjuna gratified the fire
of the Khāṇḍava-forest.

17 With your help Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
conquered the entire world.
The *sairandhrī* knows the Pāṇḍavas:
she told me all this.

18 Bṛhannalā, take charge of my horses
as you did his,
because I will fight the Kauravas
and recover my cattle.

19 You were Arjuna's favourite charioteer –
so I am told.
With your help, the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
were able to conquer the world."

20 Bṛhannalā replied to the prince:
"But what strength have I
to become your charioteer
on the battlefield?

21 May you prosper!
I could entertain you
with singing dancing, and musical instruments.
But to be a charioteer!"

22 Uttara said: "Whatever you are,
singer or dancer, Bṛhannalā,
just climb into my chariot
and manage my excellent horses."

23 Though he knew everything (Vaiśampāyana said),
foe-destroying Arjuna
deliberately committed silly mistakes
in order to amuse Uttara.

24 He jerked the armour up
and tried to put it on;
the large-eyed girls watched him
and tittered.

25 Seeing him all bewildered and upset,
Uttara personally
dressed Bṛhannalā
in a magnificent suit of armour.

26 His own armour had the splendour and dazzle
of the sun.
He raised his lion-emblem flag and,
appointing Bṛhannalā

27 His charioteer, and equipping himself
with the most expensive bows
and beautiful arrows,
heroic Uttarā marched out.

28 Uttarā and the other *sakhīs* said:
"O Bṛhannalā,
do bring us
all the super-fine fabrics

29 You can find – you know, for our dolls,
the soft, lovely cloths
you can lay hands on,
after defeating Bhīṣma and Droṇa."

30 Pāṇḍu's son Pārtha-Arjuna smiled and,
putting on his gruffest voice,
like a cloud roaring or *dundubhi*-drum beating,
said to the girls:

31 "I will certainly get you
all the lovely cloths you want
if Uttara can vanquish
all those mahā-chariot-heroes."

32 With those words, Arjuna sped the horses
towards the army of the Kauravas
whose flags waved
in the far distance.

33 Seeing Uttara sitting
in the chariot with Bṛhannalā,
the girls and the excellent-
vowed Brahmins performed
pradakṣiṇa around it,
and chanted these words:

34 "Bṛhannalā!
May the victory that bull-gaited Arjuna
Achieved in the past
In the Khāṇḍava-blaze
Be yours today,
As you drive into battle
Leading Uttara against the Kauravas."

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 As they emerged from the capital
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the fearless son of Virāṭa ordered:
"On to the Kauravas!

2 I will rout the Kauravas
who came here seeking victory,
I will recover all our cattle
and return to the capital."

3 Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
urged the splendid horses forward,
Directed by the excellent charioteer,
the magnificent wind-swift horses,
sporting gold necklaces,
seem to fly through the sky.

4 Virāṭa's son and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
both vanquishers of foes,
saw the huge army
of the strong-armed Kauravas.

5 They blocked off the army
near the cremation grounds.
They formed a *vyūha*-tactic
near the *śamī*-trees.

6 The massive army of the Kauravas
looked like an ocean,
like a serpentine forest of trees
weaving through the sky.

7 O best of the Kauravas,
the marching army raised swarms of dust
that clouded the sky
and blurred the sight of all creatures.

8 Seeing that mahā-army,
with its elephants, horses and chariots
led by Karṇa, Duryodhana, Kṛpa
and Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,

9 Droṇa and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman –
both intelligent and brave bowmen –,
Virāṭa's son horripilated with fear
and said to Arjuna:

10 "I am afraid to fight the Kauravas.
Look, my hairs stand on end.
Even the gods would fear
such an enemy army.

11 It seems to be limitless.
How can I ever defeat it?
Leave aside fighting,
I cannot even describe its size.

12 Any number of horses and chariots!
Any number of armed foot-soldiars!
Flags waving!
My courage fails me completely.

[IV:38:13-22]

13 Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Kṛpa, Karṇa, Viviṁśati,
Aśvatthāman, Vikarṇa, Somadatta, Bāhlīka,

14 Brave rājā Duryodhana, a magnificent chariot-hero,
And many other bowmen skilled in battle!

15 Roused to battle-pitch, these beflagged heroes
stand prepared to meet any adversary –
and they are skilled
in all the arts of warfare.

16 These mahā-chariot-heroes appear to be invincible,
they could face and defeat
the gods led by Vāsava-Indra.
Their horses and elephants are caprisoned.

17 Their vividly-decorated cavalry
defends the army on all sides,
the horses neighing for victory.
I am a fool!

18 After surveying these veteran warriors
poised for battle,
I am overcome by fear.
My hair stands on end."

19 The foolish fearful Uttara
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
stupidly began complaining in front of the brave,
ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna:

20 "My father marched out against the Trigartas
with all the army,
leaving me to guard a city
that had no soldiers in it.

21 I am alone; I am only a boy;
I have no experience of weapons;
I cannot fight these veterans.
O Bṛhannalā! Let us go back!"

22 Bṛhannalā said: "You shiver with fear,
and delight your enemies.
And no fighting has even occurred
on the battlefield yet!

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23 Didn't you tell me yourself,
'Drive me to the Kauravas!'
I intend to take you
where the battle flags are fluttering.

24 O mahā-muscled one,
the Kauravas are poised over our cattle
like vultures over carcases.
I would fight them for the earth itself!

25 You made a great show of your strength
in front of all the women and men
before you left.
Why do you want to surrender now?

26 If you don't defeat them
and recover your cattle, brave one,
those women and men
will laugh at you.

27 And after the recommendation as charioteer
I received from the *sairandhrī*,
how can I return to the capital
without the cattle?

28 Because you asked, and she recommended,
I came.
She praised me highly.
Why shouldn't I fight the Kauravas? Shut up!"

29 Uttara replied: "Let the Kauravas take away
whatever Matsya wealth they like.
Bṛhannalā, let the women and men
make fun of me.

30 Let the cattle be scattered,
let my defenceless city be pillaged,
let me face my father's censure.
I am determined I will not fight."

31 With these words (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the earringed hero jumped off his chariot,
flung away his bow and arrows and his pride,
and fled the field.

32 Bṛhannalā shouted: "It is not Kṣatriya dharma
to run from battle.
Better to die on the field
than fly from it."

33 Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna leapt down
from the excellent chariot
and started chasing the prince
who was running as fast as he could.

34 His sparkling white dress and long plaited hair
fluttered behind him.
Not knowing it was Arjuna's long hair
streaming,

35 Some soldiers guffawed
at the strange spectacle.
The Kauravas also saw him rushing by,
and wondered:

36 "Who can this person be,
this ember-hidden blaze?
He looks half a man,
and half a woman.

37 He has the dress of a eunuch,
but he looks like Arjuna –
the same head,
the same neck and mace-thick arms.
He even runs like Arjuna.
It must be Dhanañjaya-Arjuna himself!

38 Arjuna shines among human beings
as Devendra-Indra among the gods.
Who but Dhanañjaya-Arjuna would dare
to meet us singlehanded in battle?

39 The empty capital of Virāṭa
was left in the charge of one son.
He came out of bravado,
not bravery.

40 It is obvious that he appointed
Pārtha-Arjuna his charioteer
and plucked up courage to come here.
Arjuna is disguised.

41 Seeing us the king's son lost his nerve
and is running away –
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna is sprinting after him
to bring him back."

42 This is what the Kauravas thought
(said Vaiśampāyana),
each trying to find the answer,
but coming to no conclusion,

43 When they saw the disguised Pāṇḍava
on the battlefield.
Duryodhana said to the soldiers
and great chariot-heroes:

44 "Neither Arjuna, Vāsudeva-Krishna, Balarāma
nor even Pradyumna
will dare to challenge us
on the field of battle.

45 If anyone dares come here
disguised as a hermaphrodite
to take away these cattle,
I will level him with the ground.

46 What man is there who dares to face
all us Kauravas single-handed?"
The others whispered, "Can it be Arjuna?
No, it's not him."

47 The mahā-chariot-heroes were undecided
in this matter.
Some whispered: "He is powerful like Śakra-Indra,
he humbles his enemies.

48 If it really is he who is here to fight,
our army is doomed."
They could not, however, be sure
that it was Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

49 Meanwhile, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
chased the fleeing Uttara,
and, within a hundred strides,
seized him by his hair.

50 Held fast by Arjuna,
Virāṭa's son Uttara burst out
into a long, piteous moaning,
like one totally desolated:

51 "Oh lovely, slim-waisted Bṛhannalā,
my beautiful one!
Turn back the chariot!
He who lives is he who prospers.

52 I offer you a hundred pure gold coins,
I offer you
eight mahā-dazzling, gold encrusted stones
of lapis lazuili,

53 I offer you a golden-flagstaffed chariot
pulled by magnificent horses,
and ten musth elephants.
Let me go, Bṛhannalā!"

54 Tiger-among-men Arjuna held on firmly
to the whining, bewildered Uttara,
and pulled him
towards the chariot.

55 Partha-Arjuna said to the sense-deprived
and fear-stricken prince:
"Foe-crusher, if you are afraid
to fight your enemies,
here, hold the reins
and let me fight them.

56 Let the strength of my powerful arms
lead you into the centre
of that tremendous cavalry-guarded array
of mahā-chariot-heroes.

57 Cast off your fear, excellent prince!
Vanquisher of your foes, tiger-among-men!
You are a Kṣatriya!
How can you despair before an enemy?

58 Look, I will strike deep inside their ranks,
I will fight the Kauravas
and rout them,
and recover the cattle.

59 O finest of men! Just be my charioteer,
and let me do the fighting."
Never-defeated dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
re-inspired Virāṭa's son.

60 Excellent Parthā-Arjuna, best of repressors,
assisted the fear-paralysed,
unwilling-to-fight prince
into the chariot.

61 He succeeded in persuading Uttara
to be his charioteer.
He directed Uttara to the *śamī-tree*
where his-bow was hidden.

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 Seeing that bull-brave hero sitting in the chariot
dressed as a hermaphrodite
being driven by Uttarā
to the *śamī-tree*,

2 The excellent chariot-warriors of the Kauravas
led by Bhīṣma and Droṇa
were overcome by their fear
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

3 Droṇa saw their morale droop;
he saw strange omens appear;
Droṇa, super-excelling arms-wielder,
son of Bharadvāja, said:

4 "Fierce, dry winds scatter dust and grit
in the sky.
The sky is enveloped
in an ash-grey darkness.

5 The weirdly wonderful clouds
look withered and shrunken.
Our weapons seem to slide by themselves
out of their cases.

6 The fires on all sides have the jackals
howling horrendously.
The horses are shedding tears,
and flags flutter by themselves.

7 With so many different omens of dread
visible everywhere,
it is certain that calamity will strike soon.
So be prepared.

8 Be on your guard.
Take steps to form the army ranks.
Protect the cattle.
Be prepared for a bloody slaughter.

9 The all-weapons-expert hero,
the mahā-archer
who is here today
disguised as a hermaphrodite,
is surely
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son.

10 O son-of-a-river, Bhīṣma!
The girl-disguised man
is the son of the foe-
of-mountains Indra, his flag
has the sign of the Laṅkā-destroyer
Hanumān. I think
we are doomed at his hands
today; the diademed hero
will take back the cattle we have.

11 He is Savyasācī Pārtha-Arjuna,
the ambidexterous destroyer of foes –
he will not stop even if it means
fighting the gods and antigods.

12 He suffered many hardships in the forest,
and he received training
from Vāsava-Indra.
His fury makes him the equal of Indra
on the battlefield. I know of no Kaurava
who can withstand him.

13 It is said that Mahādeva-Śīva,
in the mountains of Himavant,
disguised as a hunter,
was gratified by Pārtha-Arjuna."

14 Karṇa said: "You always praise Phālguna-Arjuna
and undervalue us.
He is not one-sixteenth of me,
or of Duryodhana."

15 "Son of Radha, if it is really Arjuna,"
said Duryodhana, "O lord of the world,
my work's done! The Pāṇḍavas are discovered!
Twelve years' more exile!

16 And if it is someone else disguised
as a hermaphrodite,
I will soon level him with the ground
with fierce arrows."

17 O foe-destroying Janamejaya! Duryodhana said this.
The others – Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and Droṇa's son Asvatthāman –
pūjā-praised him for his courage.

SECTION FORTY

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Near the *śamī*-tree,
Arjuna concluded that Virāṭa's son
was callow and battle-shy;
he said to Uttara:

2 "Follow my orders and get me the bow
hidden in this tree.
Your own bow is not strong enough
for my shooting.

3 I use my full strength when shooting down
horses and elephants.
I pull full-stretch
when fighting my foes.

4 Your weapons are too small,
too delicate for my skills –
I cannot defeat your enemies
with their help.

5 O mahā-muscled crusher of foes!
Lord of earth!
Quickly climb up this beautiful *śamī*-tree,
Uttara.

6 Hidden atop this tree are the bows
of the five Pāṇḍava brothers –
Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna and the twins.

7 The brave heroes' flags, arrows
and celestial armour
are also here,
as well as the mahā-Gāṇḍīva bow

8 Of Pārtha-Arjuna,
which equals a hundred thousand others.
It conquers kingdoms, is palm-tree-tall,
absorbs all strain,

9 It is the largest of all weapons,
it routs any enemy,
it is gold-decorated, it is divine,
smooth, eye-captivating,

10 It can impact any blow.
The other bows, belonging to Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma, Bībhatsu-Arjuna and the twins,
are equally strong."

SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 "I have heard of a corpse
dangling from this tree,"
said Uttara. "How can a prince
go near a defiling corpse?

2 I am a Kṣatriya, a prince,
I observe all yajñas and mantras.
How can I risk touching a corpse?
It is not right.

3 Bṛhannalā, why do you want
to have me polluted
by getting me involved with the touching
of a corpse?"

4 Bṛhannalā replied: "Do not fear, O Indra-among-rājās.
You will remain undefiled.
There is no corpse on this tree.
Only our weapons.

5 Why would I want to do something
so shameful?
I know you are the heir
to the Matsya kingdom."

6 Persuaded by Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, Virāṭa's son,
wearing ear rings,
descended from the chariot
and reluctantly climbed the *śamī*-tree.

7 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, from the chariot,
gave him instructions:
"Get the bows down quickly
from the tree-top!

8 Remove their wrappers. Quick!"
Uttara took off the wrappers,
and untied the ropes
with which the bows were strapped
to the branches. He placed them
in front of Arjuna –

9 All the magnificent bows
with their huge curved staffs.
He saw the Gāṇḍīva
and the four other bows.

10 The uncovered bows shone
with the dazzle of the sun;
they glowed with the glory of planets
emerging into light.

11 They lay there like massive serpents
coiled to hiss fiercely;
Uttara was so awe-struck
that his body-hairs horripilated.

12 He slowly touched those gigantic,
radiant, powerful bows;
then, O rājā Janamejaya, the son of Virāṭa
said to Arjuna:

SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 "Who is the glorious hero who owns
this splendid bow,
which has shining ends
and a hundred gold-embossed designs?

2 Who is the owner of this easy-to-hold,
smoothly polished bow,
whose staff has a hundred gold-worked
elephant-designs?

3 Who is the owner of this dazzling bow
whose back is decorated
with three-score exquisitely-carved golden
indragopaka-insects?

4 Who is the owner of this excellent bow
that burns in its own lustre
and has three flaming sun symbols
on it?

5 Who is the owner of this glorious bow,
encrusted with gold and jewels,
which has golden *śalabha*-insects
set in precious stones?

6 Who is the owner
of these three thousand winged arrows
with golden points,
placed inside these golden quivers?

7 And what about these massive arrows,
with wings as large as those of vultures,
made of iron, yellow-coloured,
and extremely sharp?

8 Who is the owner of this dark quiver
that is ornamented
with five tiger-symbols,
and has ten boar-eared arrows?

9 Who is the owner of these long, thick,
five hundred *nārāca*-arrows
shaped like the crescent moon
and capable of sucking blood?

10 Who is the owner of these gold-plumed
stone-whetted arrows,
whose bodies are parrot-feather-coloured
and tips of fine steel?

11 Who is the owner of this celestial, heavy,
irresistible, fearful-to-foes long sword,
bee-headed
and bee-symbolled?

12 Who is the owner
of this fine-bladed massive gold sword,
with jingling *kiṅkiṇi*-bells
and a colourful tigerskin sheath?

13 Who is the owner
of this golden-hilted celestial scimitar,
whose dazzlingly polished blade
lies in a cowskin scabbard?

14 Who is the owner of this gold sword,
made in Niṣadha,
incredibly heavy in its sheath
made of goatskin?

15 Who is the owner of this sword
dark as a cloud,
resting in a sheath of gold
that flames like fire?

16 And who is the owner of this huge, dark,
nistriṁśa-sword
designed for attack?
Who owns this golden-pointed iron sword

17 As fearful to touch as a snake,
capable of slicing
fluidly through flesh,
a celestial, terror-producing weapon?

18 Bṛhannalā, tell me all this,
for I am eager to know.
I am bewildered by all this mahā-weaponry.
Tell me the truth."

SECTION FORTY-THREE

1 Bṛhannalā replied: "Your first enquiry
concerned the world-famous,
army-destroying Gāṇḍīva-bow
of Pārtha-Arjuna.

2 It is gold-decorated, it is the mightiest
of all weapons.
It is the great Gāṇḍīva,
the weapon favoured by Arjuna.

3 It has the force of a hundred thousand bows,
it can enhance the glory of kingdoms.
With it Pārtha-Arjuna defeated
gods and men.

4 The gods offer pūjā to it,
as do Dānava anti-gods and gandharvas.
It is vividly-coloured,
it is knotlessly smooth.

5 Brahmā possessed it for a thousand years,
after which
it came to Prajāpati,
who possessed it

6 For five hundred
and three years.
Śakra-Indra was next,
for five hundred and eighty.
Then Soma, for five hundred,
and Varuṇa for one hundred.

7 Finally, it came to Śvetavāhana-Arjuna,
rider of white horses,
who has possessed for sixty-five years
this strong, celestial bow.

8 Arjuna received this bow from Varuṇa.
This bow receives the pūjā-respect
of gods and men:
it is an eye-enchanting weapon.

9 This bow, with exquisitely lovely sides
and golden staff,
belongs to Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Bhīma;
with it he conquered the eastern region.

10 O Uttara! This colourful, variedly-carved bow
designed with a cluster
of *indragopaka*-insect symbols,
belongs to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

11 And this one, which has golden sun-designs
of dazzling effulgence
scattering radiance on all sides,
belongs to Nakula.

12 This bow, carved with *śalabha*-insect-symbols
and set with jewels and precious stones,
belongs to Sahadeva,
the son of Mādrī.

13 The thousand winged arrows,
razor-sharp and as fatal as snake-poison,
belong to Arjuna,
O son of Virāṭa.

14 When these swift arrows
are discharged against enemies
by that energy-flaming hero,
they get automatically replenished.

[IV:43:15-23]

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15 These arrows here, long, sharp, and heavy,
looking like so many crescent moons,
capable of liquidating foes,
belong to Bhīma.

16 That quiver there,
with its five tiger-symbols,
with yellow, gold-winged, stone-whetted arrows,
is Nakula's.

17 This quiver belongs
to the intelligent son of Mādrī, Nakula,
and with it he conquered
the western region.

18 These sun-bright arrows,
painted in a variety of colours,
which can wipe out thousands of enemies,
belong to intelligent Sahadeva.

19 And these mahā-arrows here,
sharp, yellow, heavy, long,
gold-feathered and triple-knotted,
belong to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

20 This long sword, bee-symbolled on the back,
and sharp as a bee-sting,
dependably heavy in battle,
is Arjuna's.

21 This massive celestial sword
sheathed in tigerskin,
dependably heavy in battle, foe-destructive,
belongs to Bhīma.

22 This brilliant incomparable sharp-bladed sword
with its golden hilt
and painted sheath,
belongs to intelligent Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

23 This tremendous sword, specially designed
for varied manoeuvres,
encased in a sheath of goatskin,
belongs to Nakula.

24 And this massive, strong, fear-instilling sword,
dependably heavy in battle,
sheathed in cowhide,
belongs to Sahadeva."

SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 Uttara said: "How beautiful
are these gold-worked weapons
which belong to the dexterous-handed
mahātmā Pāṇḍavas.

2 But where are they –
I mean Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Arjuna,
and the Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira, Nakula and Sahadeva,
and Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma?

3 Why is it that we never get news
of those mahātmās
who gambled away their kingdom,
who can rout all their foes?

4 And where is the princess of Pāñcāla,
that gem of a lady Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
who followed them into exile
after their dice-defeat?"

5 "I am Arjuna," said Arjuna, "Pṛthā-Kuntī's son.
Your father's courtier is Yudhiṣṭhira,
and the wizard-cook Ballava
is really Bhīma.

6 Nakula has been given charge of horses,
Sahadeva of the cows;
the *sairandhrī* is Draupadī,
for whom Kicaka lost his life."

7 "I will believe all this," said Uttara,
"if you can recite to me
the ten names of Pārtha-Arjuna
that I have heard before."

8 "I will recite you my ten names,"
replied Arjuna,
"the ones you have heard.
Listen, son of Virāṭa,

9 And give me your undivided mind
and attention:
Arjuna, Phālguni, Jiṣṇu, Kirīṭin,
Śvetavāhana,
Bībhatsu, Vijaya, Kṛṣṇa, Savyasācī,
and Dhanañjaya."

10 "Why are you named Vijaya?" asked Uttara.
"Why Śvetavāhana?
Why are you known as Kirītin?
And why Savyasācī?

11 And tell me why
you have the following appellations too –
Arjuna, Phālguni, Jiṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa,
Bībhatsu, Dhanañjaya.

12 I have heard before why
you were given these names.
I will believe you
if you can explain them fully."

13 "I am Dhanañjaya the Wealth-Victor,"
replied Arjuna,
"because I enjoy the wealth of the lands
that I conquer.

14 I am Vijaya the Conqueror
because when I fight
so-called invincible warriors,
I return after defeating them.

15 I am Śvetavāhana the White-rider
because, when I fight,
the horses yoked to my chariot
are always golden-white.

16 I am Phālguni because I was born
when in Himavant
the constellation Uttara-Phālguni
was in the ascendant.

17 I am Kirīṭin the Diademed One
because a sun-bright crown
was placed on my head by Śakra-Indra
when I battled the Dānava-anti-gods.

18 I am Bībhatsu the Loathsome One,
so named by gods and men
because I have never committed any atrocity
on the battlefield.

19 I am Savyasācī the Ambidexterous One
to gods and men
because I wield the Gāṇḍīva equally well
with both hands.

20 I am Arjuna the Spotless One
because my skin-clarity
is rarely found in the four-directioned earth;
also, I do pure deeds.

21 I am Jiṣṇu the Triumphant One to gods and men
because I am
the unapproachable, irrepressible, undefeatable son
of Pāka-slaying Indra.

22 My tenth name Kṛṣṇa the Dark One
was given affectionately by my father
because I was the dark boy
of great purity."

23 The son of Virāṭa approached Pārtha-Arjuna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said : "My name is Bhumiñjaya,
also called Uttara.

24 It is my good fortune to have seen you,
son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Dhanañjaya, I welcome you,
O pink-eyed warrior
whose mahā-muscled arms
resemble the trunks of elephants.

25 Forgive me all that I spoke earlier;
I did not know.
You have accomplished such wonderful
superhuman feats –
my fear is all gone,
I am filled with love for you.

26 Let me be your slave!
Look on me with compassion.
I am ready to be your charioteer,
as I promised.
My mind is firm. I am mahā-fortunate!
I am mahā-fortunate!"

SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 "Where, O hero, do you want me
as your charioteer to attack?
Order me, and I will drive you there,"
said Uttara.

2 "Tiger-among-men," replied Arjuna,
"you need not fear.
You have pleased me.
I will scatter your enemies today.

3 So relax, O mahā-muscled hero,
and watch me
as I finish off your foes
with my mahā-tremendous feats.

4 Strap all these quivers to the chariot.
Do this quickly.
Pick up a gold-decorated sword
with a glittering blade."

5 These words of Arjuna (continued Vaiśampāyana)
roused Uttara to action.
He swiftly descended from the tree
with Arjuna's weapons.

6 "I will rout the Kaurava army
and recover the cattle,"
Arjuna said. "This chariot is your fort,
my arms its ramparts,
this triple pole and my arrows its defences.
Look at the pennant!

7 It flutters like the palace flag
in grand display!
My bowstring is the belching catapult
repulsing attackers.

8 My bow, stretched traut in anger,
will sound like *dundubhi*-war-drums.
This chariot indeed is your city,
protected by me –

9 This is the chariot you drive.
So long as I wield the Gāṇḍīva,
none can defeat us.
Son of Virāṭa, cast off your fear."

10 Uttara replied: "I am not afraid,
not any more.
I know you are as firm as Keśava-Krishna
or as Indra.

11 But there is one thing that continues
to bewilder me.
The more I think, the more I am confused.
I must be foolish.

12 How could such terrible adversity come,
to turn a person
handsome like you, with all the auspicious marks,
into a hermaphrodite?

13 You must be trident-wielding Śūlapāṇi-Śiva himself,
or even Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices,
or the rājā of the gandharvas,
disguised as a hermaphrodite."

14 "I am a hermaphrodite
because of Urvaśī's curse,"
replied Arjuna. "I went to heaven,
ordered by my eldest brother Yudhiṣṭhira,

15 And there in the hall named Sudharma
I saw Urvaśī,
enchantingly lovely, dancing in front
of thunder-wielding Indra.

16 Because she was one of my family's ancestors,
I looked on her dispassionately!
She came to my bed at night
for love.

17 I bowed to her,
and treated her as a mother.
She was furious, she cursed me, saying,
'You'll be a pea-hen eunuch!'

18 Indra heard of the curse and said to me,
'Pārtha-Arjuna, do not worry.
The eunuch-curse
will serve you well in exile.'

19 With these comforting words
Indra let me leave heaven.
O faultless one! As hermaphrodite,
I am fulfilling that curse on me.

20 The truth is that I am observing
this eunuch-vow for one year
as ordered
by my eldest brother Yudhiṣṭhira.

21 O mahā-muscled her, I am not really
a eunuch or hermaphrodite or whatever,
I am following dharma by keeping a vow.
It is now completed."

22 "You have favoured me with your explanation,"
said Uttara. "O finest of men!
I was not altogether wrong,
People like you cannot be eunuchs.

23 I have now someone to help me
on the battlefield –
I can fight gods now! I am fearless.
Command me!

24 An excellent teacher instructed me
in horsemanship. O bull-brave hero!
I will control your horses
that can penetrate chariot-ranks.

25 O bull-brave warrior!
Think of me as a charioteer
who is the equal of Vāsudeva-Krishna's Dāruka
or Śakra-Indra's Mātali.

26 The right-wheeled horse whose hooves
seem not to touch the earth
as he gallops,
is like Krishna's Sugrīva.

27 The left-wheeled horse, the finest of its breed,
a really magnificent specimen,
is as fast as the horse
called Meghapuṣpa.

28 The rear left-wheeled horse,
caparisoned in gold,
equals Śaibya in speed
but excels him in stamina.

29 The fourth, the rear right-wheeled,
is said to be superior
to Balāhaka
in both speed and stamina.

30 This chariot is worthy of a bowman like you,
and you
are worthy of a chariot like this.
No doubt of this."

31 Arjuna took off the bangles on his arms,
and put on
a pair of gold-embroidered,
beautiful finger-protectors.

32 He tied his black, curly hair
with a white band.
Sitting in the chariot facing east,
mahā-muscled Arjuna controlled his mind
and purified his thought,
concentrating on his weapons.

33 The weapons responded to the royal son of Kuntī;
saying, with *añjali*-respect,
"Son of Pāṇḍu, we are here ready
to serve you."

34 He honoured them; then, lifting them
in both hands,
Pārtha-Arjuna said:
"May you live in my deepest mind."

35 He held the weapons
and his face glowed with delight.
Lifting the Gāṇḍīva bow, he strung it,
and stretched it.

36 The mahā-twang of the bow reverberated
like the collision
of one mountain with another –
a fierce, deafening noise,

37 So horrendous that it shook the earth.
Fierce winds blew,
flaming torches fell,
the four quarters seemed to blur,
birds flapped in the sky,
huge trees began to tremble.

38 That thunderous peal of Arjuna's bow
made the Kauravas feel
that lightning was exploding
in the far distance.

39 Uttara said: "You are one, O excellent Pāṇḍava,
and they are many.
How can you defeat those weapons-expert
mahā-chariot-heroes?

40 You have no ally, son of Kuntī,
the Kauravas have many.
O mahā-muscled hero,
I still have some apprehensions."

41 Pārtha-Arjuna laughed loudly and said:
"Who helped me
when I fought the mahā-powerful gandharvas
in Ghoṣa-yātrā?

42 Who came to my help when I fought
that fierce battle
against the gods and Dānava-antigods
in Khāṇḍava?

43 When I helped Devarāja-Indra
against the mahā-powerful Nivātakavacas
and Paulomas, who was there
that came to help me?

44 And when I fought the countless rājās
at the svayamvara
of the princess of Pāñcāla,
who was my friend?

45 I have learnt warfare from guru Droṇa,
from Śakra-Indra,
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, Yama, Varuṇa, Pāvaka-Agni,
Kṛpa, Krishna of the Mādhavas,

46 And the trident-wielder himself, Pinākapāṇi-Śiva,
and will I be afraid
of these warriors here?
Drive on! And do not fear."

SECTION FORTY-SIX

1 With Uttara as his charioteer,
bull-brave Pāṇḍava Arjuna circumambulated
in *pradakṣiṇa* the *śamī*-tree and, taking all his weapons,
drove to the field.

2 The mahā-chariot-hero removed
the lion-symbolled flag
and planted it at the foot of the tree
before riding off to battle.

3 He raised his own ape-with-lion's-tail
golden banner,
with the help of the māyā
created by Viśvakarman.

4 The instant he thought of Pāvaka-Agni,
the fire-deity
gratified his wish by providing
the lion-tailed creature.

5 A mahā-powerful, divine flagstaff,
with gold carvings,
banner waving and quivers attached,
fell from the sky inside the chariot.

6 Seeing the banner fall upright,
Arjuna respectfully half-circled his chariot.
White-horsed Svetavāhana-Arjuna,
Bibhatsu son of Kuntī,

7 Possessor of the lion-tailed-ape banner,
wearing lizard-skin finger-protectors,
lifted his bow and arrows,
and drove northwards.

8 The valiant foe-crusher blew hard
on his thunder-noised mahā-conch
till the body-hairs of his enemies
stood on end.

9 The conch into which foe-crushing Bībhatsu-Arjuna
blew was moon-white;
its roaring sound was like the onrush
of dark rain-clouds.

10 The peal of the conch,
the twang of the bowstring,
the scream of the ape, the rattle of chariot-wheels
of Pākśāsani-Indra's son Arjuna
produced a commotion
that shattered the peace of creatures.

11 That tremendous sound made the swift horses
almost collapse.
Fear-stricken Uttara sat dumbfounded
in the chariot.

12 Urging the horses up with the reins
and calming them,
Arjuna embraced Uttara;
Kuntī's son said to Uttara:

The Mahabharata of Vyasa

13 “Foe-crushing prince, do not fear.
You are a Ksatriya. O tiger-among-men!
Why do you despair
in the presence of enemies?

14 You have heard many conches pealing,
many *bheri*-drums blaring,
many elephants screaming
in armies arrayed for battle.

15 Why are you suddenly agitated and dejected
by the sound of a conch,
as any ordinary man
would be?”

16 Uttara replied:
“I have heard many conches pealing,
many *bheri*-drums blaring,
many elephants screaming in battle –

17 But I have never in my life
heard so terrifying a sound
as your conch’s.
I have never seen a banner like yours.

18 I have never heard a bow twanging
as yours does.
The blowing of your conch,
the reverberating of your bow,

19 And the unearthly cries of the creatures
on your banner,
mixed with the chariot’s rattle,
have caused havoc in me.

20 The quarters are confused,
my mind seems to be whirling;
flags obscure the quarters,
and I have lost all sense of direction.

21 The twang of the Gāṇḍīva bow
has deafened my ears.”
Even as he said this,
Arjuna consoled the son of Virāṭa

22 With these words: "Stand firmly in the chariot
press your feet down hard.
Hold the reins tight.
I will blow again."

23 Once again Arjuna blew into the conch
whose sound
caused grief to enemies
and gave delight to friends.

24 The caves, hills, mountains and quarters
seemed to be rent apart.
Uttara clutched the reins tight,
and sat still.

25 The earth shuddered
with the peal of the conch,
the chariot's rattle and the Gāṇḍīva-bow's twang.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna pacified Uttara.

26 Droṇa said: "It seems from the rattle
of the chariot,
the earth's shuddering, and clouds appearing,
that this is ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna.

27 Our weapons lose their lustre,
our horses are dejected, and,
though we add fuel to them,
our fires do not burn.

28 Animals look up at the sun
and scream fearfully;
crows perch on our flagstaffs.
These are not good omens.

29 Vultures and kites on our right
portend a mahā disaster.
A jackal scampers wailing
through the ranks of our army.

30 Other jackals run wild.
I foresee a mahā-disaster.
I see your body-hairs horripilating
in awed fear.

31 I foresee the deaths of many Kṣatriyas
on the battlefied.
The shining planets are hidden;
birds and beasts are terrified.

32 All this points to a massacre of Kṣatriyas
in battle.
All this points to calamity
for all of us.

33 Your meteor-harassed and animal-hounded army,
O lord-of-the-world Duryodhana,
seems to have lost heart,
your soldiers are on the verge of tears.

34 Vultures and kites swoop all round
your soldiers' ranks.
You will regret the hour
when Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows strike them down.

35 We have lost, because our soldiers
do not wish to fight.
They stand pale and dejected.
Let us drive the cattle
to our rear, and get ready
for the fatal battle."

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Rājā Duryodhana,
on the battlefield, said to Bhīṣma,
tiger-brave chariot-hero Droṇa,
and finest of maha-chariot-warriors Kṛpa:

2 "Ācārya, I and Karṇa have said this before
often enough.
I repeat it now, because it seems
enough was not enough.

3 The condition of the dice-game was that,
if defeated,
the Pāṇḍavas would be exiled for twelve years,
the thirteenth to be passed in secret.

4 The thirteenth year is not yet over.
Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
who is supposed to live undetected,
has dared to face us.

5 If he dares to break his agreement,
the Pāṇḍavas must accept
another twelve years of exile
in the forest.

6 It may be greed making him forgetful,
or just an oversight.
It is right that Bhīṣma should calculate
the exact period of exile.

7 When there are two alternatives,
here is always doubt.
One thinks of one way,
it turns out to be another.

8 We came here to fight the Matsyas
of the north.
Is it our fault that Bībhatsu-Arjuna comes forward
to repulse us?

9 We came here to fight the Matsyas
on the Trigartas' behalf.
The atrocities of the Matsyas
were all described to us –

10 And we promised to help the fear-stricken people
of Trigarta.
Our plan was that,
at noon on the seventh lunar day,
they would attack and rush off
with the mahā-wealth of Matsya cattle.

11 At sunrise on the eighth lunar day,
we were to enter as reinforcements
and cut off
the cattle-pursuing Matsya army.

12 The Trigartas may be bringing
the cattle still;
perhaps they have been defeated
and want us to make peace with Matsya.

13 It may be that the king of Matsya,
having finished off the Trigartas,
is marching against us
this very night
with his enormous army
to fight a pitched battle.

14 Perhaps some over-zealous warrior
of the Matsya army
has risked attacking us –
it could be the king of Matsya himself.

15 Whether it is the rājā or Bībhatsu-Arjuna
now marching upon us,
we have determined
to fight the attacker.

16 How is it therefore
that all the great chariot-warriors –
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Vikarṇa,
and the son of Droṇa, Aśvatthāman –

17 Sit in their chariots as if speechless?
We must act, and quickly.
No choice now but war.
Prepare your minds.

18 If, to keep these cattle in our hands,
it is necessary
to oppose the thunder-wielder Indra or Yama,
we will do so.
Who is there who now wants to retreat
to Hastināpura?

19 If any soldier flees into the thick woods,
my arrows will cut him down
All fleet-footed cowards
will be mercilessly killed."

20 Responding to Duryodhana's command,
Rādhā's son Karṇa said:
"Ignore all that ācārya Droṇa has said,
and make preparations.

21 He knows the mind of the Pāṇḍavas,
and wants only to frighten us.
He has the greatest affection
for Arjuna.

22 Droṇa can think only of chanting dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna's praises.
Make plans to see that soldiers,
who joined us
from far countries in this mahā-forest,
are not exposed to the enemy.

23 Droṇa hears Arjuna's horses neighing,
and he is thrilled.
Make arrangements to secure our army;
stop all this confusion.

24 The Pāṇḍavas have always received
very special treatment from the ācārya.
His words betray him –
he favours them.

25 Who praises a man for the neighing
of his horse?
Standing still or galloping,
horses are always neighing.

26 The winds are always blowing,
Vāsava-Indra is always sending rain,
and you can hear storm-clouds roaring
all the time.

27 What connection has Pārtha-Arjuṇa with these?
Why should he be praised? –
unless his good is desired,
and our downfall.

28 Ācāryas are wise, compassionate
and anti-wrongdoing,
but it is not prudent to consult them
in times of mahā-crisis.

29 These paṇḍits are seen to best advantage
in elegant mansions,
in large assemblies and gardens
where sweet discourses are given.

30 Paṇḍits prosper and shine
in large congregations
where they do wonders to the accompaniment
of rituals and chants.

31 Knowing the weaknesses of others,
analysing character,
knowing the ways of elephants,
horses and chariots,
diagnosing the diseases of asses, camels,
goats, sheep,

32 And cattle, making plans for buildings
and city-gates,
revealing adulteration of food and liquids –
these are the glorious specialities of paṇḍits.

33 Forget the paṇḍits
who always extol the virtues of your foes.
Make plans
for the extermination of your enemies.

34 Have the cattle well-guarded,
and deploy the army in battle formation.
Alert the sentries
to prepare for war."

SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 "I look at you and what do I see?"
asked Karṇa.
"All panic-stricken, paralysed, irresolute
and hesitant.

2 Let the rājā of Matsya come,
let dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna himself
come – I will take them on as a beach takes on
makara-infested ocean-waves.

3 My arrows shoot from my bow
like whistling snakes;
they do not miss,
they always find their target.

4 Fired from my expert hands,
these gold-feathered, sharp-pointed arrows
will smother Pārtha-Arjuna
like locusts swarming on a tree.

5 Bouncing back against my finger-protectors
after the winged arrows are shot,
my bowstring will produce
a *bheri*-kettledrum cacophony.

6 For thirteen years Bībhatsu-Arjuna was involved
in single-minded forest-meditation,
but he loves fighting,
and he will pick me out, I know.

7 This son of Kuntī must be a fine Brahmin
by now, full of noble qualities.
I will gift this Brahmin
thousands of arrows.

8 He is a mahā-bowman,
celebrated in the three worlds:
but I am no less
than that finest-of-men called Arjuna.

9 Let vulture-winged golden arrows
fired from all sides
fill the skies today
like flocks of fireflies!

10 I will kill Arjuna on the battlefield today;
and doing so
I will repay the unending debt
I owe Duryodhana.

11 My arrows, winged and curved in the centre,
will sweep through the sky
like a huge swarm
of *śalabha*-insects.

12 Pārtha-Arjuna may be as hard
as the thunderbolt of Indra,
he may have Indra's energy –
I will nonetheless render him helpless,
as a warrior with flaming torches
corners an elephant.

13 I will reach out from my chariot
and seize the helpless
all-arms-wielding chariot-hero,
as Garutmān-Garuḍa grips a serpent.

14 The unquenchable Pāṇḍava-fire that,
fed by the fuel
of swords, lances, and arrows,
consumes all foes –

15 I will extinguish that fire
with a mahā-raincloud of arrows,
my chariots being the thunder,
my horses the gusty winds.

16 Released from my bow,
my snake-venomed arrows will pierce
the body of Arjuna
like snakes wriggling through an ant-hill.

17 You will see the son of Kuntī,
smothered by my straight,
powerful, gold-feathered arrows,
like a hill full of *karṇikāra*-blossoms.

18 I obtained my weapons from Paraśurāma,
son of Jamadagni, an excellent ṛṣi,
I will dare challenge
Vāsava-Indra himself.

19 My *bhalla*-arrows will slice through the ape
on Arjuna's banner
and he will plummet down,
screaming weird cries of pain.

20 They sky will echo with the howls
of the animals
who ride on his flagstaff –
they will flee in noisy panic.

21 Today I will remove once and for all
the thorn that is embedded
in Duryodhana's heart,
by uncharioting Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

22 The Kauravas will today see
Pārtha-Arjuna's chariot smashed,
his horses killed, his bravery snuffed,
and he hissing like a helpless snake.

23 Let the Kauravas make up their minds –
either go, leave with the precious cattle,
or stay
and watch the combat."

SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 "Son of Rādhā," said Kṛpa,
"your streak of cruelty
makes you aggressive.
You ignore time and consequences.

2 All kinds of deluding māyā are mentioned
in the śāstras,
and history-experts have said
war is the most degarding folly.

3 Only when war is fought
at the right time and place
does it have any meaning.
War at the wrong time and place
frustrates itself,
it bring no fruit.

4 Effort prospers only when undertaken
at the right time and place.
A chariot-maker's assurances
are not enough to impress paṇḍits.

5 When I analyse the situation,
I find it is foolhardy to fight Arjuna.
Alone he saved the Kauravas
and gratified Agni.

6 Alone he practised brahmacarya for five years.
He was the one
who singlehanded abducted Subhadrā
and even challenged Krishna to a chariot-duel.

7 He fought singlehanded with Rudra-Śiva
who surprised him in a Kirāta-hunter's garb.
He was the one who rescued Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
from Jayadratha.

8 It was Arjuna who studied by himself
for five years under Śakra-Indra.
Singlehanded he has enhanced
Kaurava glory.

9 Singlehanded this great punisher of foes
tackled Citrasena,
the rājā of the gandharvas,
and routed the gandharva army.

10 Singlehanded he clashed with the dread
Nivātakavaca and Kālakhañja anti-gods,
whom even the gods
could not kill.

11 What have you done, Karṇa, alone,
that equals any of the feats
of Pāṇḍu's sons,
vanquishers of numerous earth-lords?

12 Even Indra is afraid to face Arjuna
in open battle.
The man who dares challenge Arjuna
needs strong medicine to cure his folly.

13 Why do you want to stretch out
your right hand
and with your forefinger
pluck out the fangs of an angry snake?

14 Why do you want to venture alone
into the forest
and ride an infuriated elephant hookless
inside the city?

15 Why do you want to smear ghee
all over your body
and, dressed in silk, step inside
a marrow-and-ghee-fed fire?

16 Who is the man who trusses himself,
ties a massive stone to his neck,
and tries to swim the ocean?
Brave? He's a fool!

17 Who but an utter fool would try,
without corresponding skill and strength,
to fight
amazingly accomplished Pārtha-Arjuna?

18 We humiliated him;
free after an exile of thirteen years,
will he not try to destroy us,
like an uncaged lion?

19 We have stumbled on a place where Pārtha-Arjuna
lay hidden, like fire inside a well.
We have exposed ourselves
to great peril.

20 He is fearful on the battlefield,
but we must face him.
Get the soldiers to put on armour,
and adopt battle posture.

21 Droṇa, Duryodhana, Bhīṣma, you,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman and I
will together meet Arjuna.
Do not act on impulse, Karṇa.

22 The six of us together
have power enough to fight
and even repulse Pārtha-Arjuna,
who is as fierce as the thunderbolt-wielder.

23 With our army drawn up
in meticulous *vyūha*-formation,
we will fight Arjuna as the Dānava anti-gods
fought Vāsava-Indra."

SECTION FIFTY

1 Aśvatthāman said:
"The cattle are not in our hands,
not out of Matsya, and not in Hastināpura.
So why boast, Karṇa?

2 Real heroes win great battles,
gather huge fortunes,
defeat enemies and armies,
but never speak a word.

3 Fire burns silently, the sun shines silently.
The earth sustains
the moving and unmoving life
of the world, silently.

4 The activities of the four castes
have been ordained
by Svayambhu-Self-Born Brahmā
to ensure prosperity without misbehaviour.

5 Brahmins study the Vedas
and perform the sacred rites and yajñas.
Kṣatriyas study bowcraft and offer yajñas
but not as priests.

6 Vaiśyas gather wealth and have sacred rites
performed for them by Brahmins.
Śūdras serve the three other castes,
flattering them
and bowing bamboo-like before them,
to earn a living.

7 Mahā-fortune-favoured men follow the *śāstras*
and obtain the earth's riches
by respecting their gurus even if the gurus
are not fully deserving.

8 Is there any Kṣatriya who will joyfully
flaunt the fact
that he won a kingdom at dice,
as shameless and cruel Duryodhana does?

9 Does a wise man boast of the fact
that he has used cunning and fraud
to become rich,
as a meat-seller does?

10 You have taken away the wealth
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva –
have you ever defeated them
in chariot-combat?

11 Have you ever defeated Yudhiṣṭhira
or Bhīma, the strongest of the strong?
When did you ever conquer
Indraprastha?

12 Did you win Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī in a battle?
And yet, you scoundrel,
you dared to drag her in her period,
in her single dress in the sabhā!

13 You have cut the very root
of the sandalwood tree!
When you made the Pāṇḍavas slaves,
remember what Vidura said?

14 Human beings, even insects and ants
can show only such forgiveness
as is in their power.
How can Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
ever forgive you for the insult
that Draupadī suffered?

15 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna was born
for the destruction of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.
Here you are, posing as a paṇḍit,
spouting wise sounds.
Don't you see Jiṣṇu-Arjuna will take revenge
and kill us all?

16 Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna will never withdraw,
not even if it comes
to fighting gandharvas, rākṣasas
and anti-gods.

17 He will fall with the impact of Garutmān-Garuda
on his enemy,
and uproot him
as be would a tree.

18 Who can stop pūjā-praising Pārtha-Arjuna
who excels you in prowess,
who equals rājā-of-the-gods Indra in bowcraft
and Vāsudeva-Krishna in war-skills?

19 What man can equal Arjuna
who repulses divine weapons
with divine means,
and human with human?

20 Those who know dharma say
that a disciple is like a son.
That is why Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
is so dear to Droṇa.

21 Why don't you fight the Pāṇḍavas
in the same way
you won at dice, dragged Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
and conquered Indraprastha?

22 Why don't you get your uncle Śakuni
the cunning gambler,
the prince of Gāndhāra, who knows Kṣatriya dharma,
to help you now?

23 The -bow is not known to throw dice
like *kṛta* and *dvāpara*,
but it does shoot
fiery, sharp arrows.

24 These Gāṇḍīva-fired arrows which have wings
resembling those of vultures,
have been known
to slice through mountains.

25 Antaka-Death the all-ender, the god of wind,
the horse-faced Vaḍavā-mukha god of fire
leave residue behind,
but angry Dhanañjayā-Arjuna does not.

26 You took the help of your maternal uncle
Śakuni in the dice game in the sabhā.
So take his help now
and fight if you want to.

27 Let he who wishes to fight, do so!
I will not fight Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
We will fight the Matsya king
only if he harasses us."

SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 Bhīṣma said: "Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
has clear vision. Kṛpa sees clearly.
But Karṇa seeks battle only for the sake
of Kṣatriya-dharma.

2 A learned man does not quarrel
with an ācārya.
In my opinion, we should fight,
choosing the time and place.

3 Even a learned paṇḍit has the right
to be puzzled, when he sees
five sun-dazzling risen-from-adversity opponents
ready to smite him.

4 Even dharma-knowers don't always know
what's good for them, O rājā.
That is why I am speaking,
whether you like my words or not.

5 Karṇa spoke the way he did in order
to inspire us.
Ācārya Droṇa's son should be tolerant.
Much is at stake.

6 Kuntī's son Arjuna is facing us;
we must not quarrel.
You, ācārya Droṇa and Kṛpa
should overlook what he said.

7 Dazzle is always in the sun,
brilliance always in the moon;
mastery of war-weapons
is always with you.

8 Brahmā-knowledge and Brahmā-weapons
are with you.
The four Vedas combine in one,
Kṣatriya-skills in another.

9 No person has them together except Droṇa,
the ācārya of the race of Bharata
and his son Aśvatthāman has them too.
I am sure of this.

10 In Vedānta, the Purānas and *itihāsas*
there is none, O rājā,
superior to Droṇa
except Jamadagni's son Parasurāma.

11 Brahmā-weapons and Veda-wisdom are combined
in none other than Droṇa.
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman will forgive us.
We must not quarrel.

12 We must unite forces and do our best
Against the son of the punisher-of-Pāka Indra.

13 There is no evil that can befall an army
greater than dissension
among its leaders.
The wise say so."

14 Aśvatthāman said: "O bull-brave hero!
Your words are just.
Anger drove the ācārya to speak
of the greatness of Arjuna.

15 It is necessary to recall the greatness of an enemy
along with his defects.
A guru should aways seek the welfare
of a son and a disciple."

16 Duryodhana said:
"The ācārya will pardon us
and restore peace.
If the guru is pleased, success is sure."

17 In this way (Vaiśampāyana continued)
Karṇa, Bhīṣma,
mahātmā Kṛpa and Duryodhana
made Droṇa pardon them.

18 Droṇa said; "The words of Bhīṣma,
son of Śāntanu,
have pleased me.
Let us now devise a plan by which

19 Pārtha-Arjuna may be prevented
from face-to-face encounter
with Duryodhana; also,
Duryodhana must not be made prisoner,

20 Either by over-zealous bravery
or by a foolish tactic.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna will not show himself
till the thirteenth year expires.

21 He will not let us off
simply by recovering the cattle.
He must not be allowed
to rout Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons

22 And our army.
That will be our strategy today.
Duryodhana said almost the same thing
earlier.
Consider all this, Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma,
and give us your advice."

SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 "*Kalā, kāṣṭha, muhūrta*, days,
Fortnights, months, stars, planets,

2 Seasons, years – these are Time's divisions.
The wheel of Kāla revolves," said Bhīṣma.

3 "Because there are small surpluses
in the orbiting of the constellations,
two months' surplus
comes every five years.

4 If we were to calculate in this way,
there will be an increase
of five months and twelve nights
in thirteen years.

5 So far the Pāṇḍavas have adhered
to every point of their agreement.
Bībhatsu-Arjuna is not here
without knowing this.

6 They are all mahātmās –
they know dharma and artha.
Yudhiṣṭhira is their rājā.
They will not violate dharma.

7 Kunti's sons are not greedy.
They have accomplished tasks
very difficult to accomplish.
They will not win by unjust means.

8 These Kuru descendants could have displayed
their prowess at the start,
but they refrained because they respected
Kṣatriya-dharma.

9 Anyone who considers them dishonest
will be disproved today.
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons would gladly die
than speak an untruth.

10 The bull-brave Pāṇḍavas are as powerful as Indra
the thunder-wielder;
even Indra cannot prevent them
from taking what is their due.

11 We are ranged today in battle against heroes
expert in all war-weapons.
Let us be fully prepared:
let us fight an honest war,
and see that our property is not taken away
by our enemies.

12 O Indra-among-rājās, O Kaurava!
I have never witnessed a battle
where either side is sure of victory.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna is here.

13 A battle means victory or defeat,
adversity or prosperity,
one or the other. There is no doubting
that one side will win.

14 Therefore, O Indra-among-rājās,
follow dharma and prepare for battle.
Let there be no more delay –
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna is here.

15 Arjuna can singlehanded
obliterate the entire earth.
It will be no surprise if he is able
to rout the Kauravas.
O excellent Kaurava, if you wish,
you may still offer peace terms."

16 Duryodhana replied: "Pitāmaha,
I will not return the kingdom
to the Pāṇḍavas. So let us prepare for battle,
without delay."

17 "Yet listen to me," continued Bhīṣma,
"if you wish to.
O descendant of Kuru,
what I say is meant for your good.

18 March to your capital
with a quarter of your forces.
Let another quarter escort the cattle
to your kingdom.

19 We will employ the remaining half
against Pāṇḍava-Arjuna.
I, Droṇa, Karṇa, Aśvatthānam,
and Kṛpa
will together face dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

20 Let the Matsya-king come, let Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices come –
we will withstand them
like the beach the *makara*-infested ocean."

21 These words of mahātmā Bhīṣma
(said Vaiśampāyana)
impressed them favourably;
the Kaurava rājā did as instructed.

22 Rājā Duryodhana returned to the capital,
followed by the cattle.
Bhīṣma made preparations
for the great battle.

23 Bhīṣma said: "Ācārya, you defend the middle,
Aśvatthāman the left flank,
and Saradvat's son Kṛpa
the right.

24 The Sūta's son Karṇa, clad in ful armour,
will lead the forces,
and I will take charge
of the rear."

25 All the mahā-powerful mahā-chariot-heroes
and brave mahā-bowmen
will take up battle-stations
against Pāṇḍava Arjuna."

26 Bhīṣma re-organised the army
into different strategic maṇḍala-positions,
including the Lightning-Womb, the Fish-Face,
and the Half-Circle.

27 He stood under his golden palm-banner
ready for battle,
armed with all weapons.
His glory radiated around him.

SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: The great chariot-heroes
of the Kauravas were prepared for battle
when Arjuna drove up
in his reverberating chariot.

2 They could see his banner unfurled,
they heard
the rattle of his chariot
and the twang of his taut Gāṇḍīva.

3 Seeing the glory of the mahā-chariot-warrior
who with his Gāṇḍīva
bore down on the Kaurava ranks,
Droṇa said to the Kauravas:

4 "The dazzling flag glimpsed in the distance
is Pārtha-Arjuna's:
it is his chariot's rattle
and the scream of the ape on his war flag.

5 Standing in the incomparable chariot is Arjuna,
pulling taut his incomparable Gāṇḍīva bow
which sounds
like the clap of thunder.

6 These two arrows landed
at the tips of my feet.
Two others whistled by,
almost grazing my ears.

7 Pārtha-Arjuna has completed his exile
in the forest
and performed superhuman feats.
He honours me and challenges me.

8 It is so long since I have had a glimpse
of Pāṇḍu's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
who was always admired by friends,
always successful.

9 He sits in the chariot,
shining like the ghee-
fed fire of sacred ritual,
with arrows, armour, sword,
quivers, banners, conches,
wearing a diadem."

10 The sight of sun-bright Arjuna
was so dazzling
that his enemies were forced
to shut their eyes.

11 Seeing the array of chariots,
Arjuna said to his charioteer:
"Stop the chariot so that the Kauravas
are within arrow-shot,
alongside the shame-of-our family
Duryodhana.

12 I will spare the others
and strike that ego-ridden rascal first;
that will make them all give up
and surrender their arms.

13 There in the distance
are Droṇa and his son,
and there are the mahā-bowmen
Bhīṣma, Kṛpa and Karṇa.

14 But I cannot see rājā Duryodhana.
I suspect he has escaped
by the shouthern road
with the cattle.

15 Forget these chariot-heroes!
Pursue Suyodhana- Duryodhana!
O Vairāṭa-Uttara! I will track him down,
and ensure the success of our mission.
I will defeat him,
and return with our cattle."

16 The son of Virāṭa, acting of Arjuna's orders,
skilfully guided the horses
between the bull-brave Kauravas ranks
with the intention
of intercepting Duryodhana
(said Vaiśampāyana).

17 As white-horsed Śvetavāhana-Arjuna
zigzagged his way,
eluding the Kauravas,
Kṛpa guessed his intention and said:

18 "Arjuna is out to intercept rājā Duryodhana!
He is driving breakneck
through our ranks.
Attack him from both sides!

19 No one can singly face furious Arjuna
on the battlefield,
except thousand-eyed Sahasrākṣa-Indra,
Devakī's son Krishna,
mahā-chariot-hero ācārya Bhāradvāja-Droṇa
and his son Aśvatthāman.

20 What use are cattle and riches to us
if Duryodhana himself
were to go under
like a stone in the Arjuna-ocean?"

21 Arjuna announced himself,
"I am dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna!"
He shot a shower of arrows
that stung the soldiers like *śalabha*-insects.

22 The colossal barrage of arrows
obscured everything
from the sight of the soldiers:
sky and earth were swamped.

23 Those who had come to fight
were so bewildered
they could not even run away;
they mentally offered pūjā-respect to Pārtha-Arjuna.

24 He blew on his conch
and the body-hairs of his foes stood erect;
he twanged his incomparable bow;
his banner-beasts screamed.

25 The earth shuddered
to the peal of his conch,
the rattle of his chariot,
and the twang of his Gāṇḍīva,

26 And the screams of the unearthly creatures
on his flagstaff.
Tails erect, and galloping wildly
helter-skelter,
the cattle reversed and fled back
on the southern road.

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 Confounding his foes
and recovering the cattle,
the excellent bowman, Arjuna,
eager for battle
advanced to confront
and vanquish Duryodhana.

2 The flight of the cattle
back into Matsya
made the soldiers think
Kirīṭin-Arjuna had won.
Rallying desperately,
they pounced on Arjuna.

3 Seeing them arrayed
with numberless flags,
and charging upon him,
foe-destroying Arjuna
said to Uttara,
son of Virāṭa:

4 "Manoeuvre these white
horses this way
by their golden reins.
Speedily, skilfully
position me among
the lion-like Kauravas.

5 The ill-ātmaned son
of a Sūta is eager
to grapple with me
as elephant with elephant.
Drive me to him who
is protected by Duryodhana."

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6 Piercing the ranks of the heroes
with his gold-bridled
and wind-swift horses,
the son of Virāṭa
positioned Arjuna
in the middle of the field.

7 Perceiving this ruse,
the mahā-chariot-heroes Citrasena,
Saṁgrāmajit, Śatrusaha,
and Jaya, to help Karṇa,
shot *vipātha*-arrows
and charged towards Arjuna.

8 Arjuna the excellent,
fearfully incensed,
shot flaming arrows
in swarms on the chariots
of the bull-brave Kauravas,
like fire devouring a forest.

9 The tempo of battle
grew more horrendous.
The Kaurava Vikarṇa
hurled upon Arjuna,
younger brother of Bhīma,
a cluster of *vipāṭha*-arrows.

10 But Arjuna retaliated
with arrows that pierced
the *jāmbū*-gold-plated
bow of Vikarṇa
and shredded his war-flag.
And Vikarṇa retreated.

11 Uncontrollably angered,
Śatruṁtapa released
a volley of arrows
on Pārtha Arjuna,
the repressor of foes,
the supremanly hero.

12 Trapped in the middle
of the Kaurava ranks,
Arjuna, arrow-pierced,
with five arrows wounded
Śatruṁtapa, with ten
killed his charioteer.

13 Hit by the arrow
of the bull-brave Bharata,
he dropped his armour
and fell on the field,
like a storm-smitten tree
falling off a mountain.

14 Bull-brave Arjuna
humbled the glory
of the bull-brave Kauravas.
They shook like mahā-forests
caught in the tempests
at the close of Kāla.

15 Defeated in battle
by the son of Vāsava-Indra,
they slept on the ground,
deprived of their lives,
heroic and well-dressed
donors of wealth,

16 Like gold caparisoned
steel-armoured elephants
of high Himavant.
Killing his enemies,
the heroic wielder
of the Gāṇḍīva-bow

17 Rushed through the field
like flames consuming
a summer-dry forest.
Like a spring wind
scattering withered
leaves and clouds,

18 Diadem-decked Kirīṭin-Arjuna
rushed through the forest
dispersing his enemies.
Killing the horses of
Saṁgrāmajit, the brother
of Vaikartana-Karṇa,
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
sliced off his head
with a single arrow.

19 The Sūtā's son Karṇa,
seeing his brother killed,
rushed like a tusk-jutting
elephant charging into
a mountain, or a tiger
leaping on a mahā-bull.

20 Twelve of his arrows
paralysed Arjuna,
and pierced the flesh
of the horses, and wounded
the hand of the son
of Virāṭa, Uttara.

21 Veering to meet
the charge of Karṇa,
Kirīṭin-Arjuna attacked
like the rich-plumaged
bird Garuḍa swooping
on a nest of snakes.

22 Both were great archers,
both mahā-powerful,
both destroyers of enemies.
The Kauravas watched eagerly
the result of the battle
between Arjuna and Karṇa.

23 Seeing the culprit Karṇa,
Arjuna, excited,
joyfully obscured
him and his horses,
his charioteer also,
with a shower of arrows.

24 The hosts of warriors,
headed by Bhīṣma,
their horses, chariots and elephants,
wounded by the arrows
of Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
began to lament.

25 It was then that mahātmā
Karṇa repulsed
the arrows of Arjuna,
and, armed with his bow
and arrows, stood radiant
like the dazzling sun.

26 The slap of his bowstring
on finger-protectors
deafened the skies;
the Kauravas pūjā-praised him,
clapping and blowing
on their war-conches.

27 The twang of the Gāṇḍīva
deafened the skies,
the screams of the beasts
on the banner of Arjuna
frightened the warriors.
Karṇa yelled war-cries.

28 Arjuna attacked the chariot,
the horses and charioteer
of Karṇa with arrows,
all the time glancing
at Pitāmaha-Bhīṣma
and Kṛpa and Droṇa.

29 Releasing a swarm
of cloud-like arrows,
Vaikartana-Karṇa stood firm.
Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna replied
with a second shower.

30 Arrow-clouds flew
in that battle of massive
weapons and war-skills.
The two looked like cloud-
covered sun and moon,
stationed in chariots.

31 Dexterous and intelligent
Karṇa wounded the horses
of Kirīṭin-Arjuna:
his three arrows grazed
the charioteer and three more
sliced through the flagstaff.

32 And Gāṇḍīva-wielding
heroic Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
furious like a lion
woken from slumber,
launched a volley
of thin-stemmed arrows.

33 Mahātmā hero Arjuna
displayed a magnificent
feat of arrowy strength.
His arrows splattered
on the chariot of Karṇa
like sunlight on clouds.

34 He was a lion maddened
by a charging elephant;
he pulled the bowstring
to the end of his ear,
and wounded Karṇa
all over his body.

35 The punisher of foes
wounded the arms,
the thighs, the head,
the forehead and other
parts of Karṇa
with thunderbolt-arrows.

36 Harassed by the arrows
of Pārtha-Arjuna's bow
Karṇa retreated;
he left the battle
and fled, like one elephant
vanquished by another.

SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 After the flight of Rādheya-Karṇa
(said Vaiśampāyana),
the other Kaurava heroes, led by Duryodhana,
attacked Pāṇḍava-Arjuna.

2 He stood firm as a sea-shore,
repulsing steadily the army divisions
as they rushed
like waves of arrows at him.

3 Smiling, the excellent chariot-hero,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
white-horsed Śvetavāhana son of Kuntī,
brandishing divine weapons, counter-attacked.

4 He filled the ten quarters of space
with arrows launched
from his Gāṇḍīva-bow,
like sunrays blanketing the earth.

5 There was not two fingers of space
between chariots,
horses, elephants and armour
left unpierced by his arrows.

6 The subtle and skilful manipulation
of divine weapons
by Pārtha-Arjuna, the excellent condition
of his horses,
Uttara's horsemanship – these impressed
even Jiṣṇu-Arjuna's enemies.

7 Observing his agility and skill
and his remarkable feats,
and Bībhatsu-Arjuna's doom-fire destructiveness,
everyone marvelled.

8 His enemies were afraid
to look at his flaming glory.
The arrows of Arjuna made the army
of the Kauravas

9 Resemble newly-formed clouds on a hill
suffused with the light of dawn
or like groves of aśoka trees
in full flaming bloom.

10 The blood-spattered arrow-stricken heroes
of the Kaurava army
looked like garlands
of golden but drooping flowers.

11 Tattered by Arjuna's arrows,
umbrellas and flags drifted slowly down.
Panicky horses,
their reins severed
by Pārtha-Arjuna's marksmanship, fled,
dragging chariot-fragments.

12 Wounded in ears, flanks, tusks, lower lips
and other vulnerable parts,
elephants collapsed
and died on the field.

13 The dead elephants of the Kauravas
made the earth
look like the sky covered
with black masses of clouds.

14 Mahārāja! Like the flames of Kāla
at the end of a yuga
consuming all moving and unmoving life,
Arjuna consumed all his enemies
in that awe-inspiring,
calamitous battle.

15 The strength of his weapons,
the twang of his bow,
the unearthly screams of the beasts
on his flagstaff,
the yell of the ape –
all these combined to produce

16 Terror in the soldiers of Duryodhana,
who were shaken
by the dreadful reverberations
of Bībhatsu-Arjuna's war-conch.

17 Tremendous foe-crushing Arjuna
had already unchARioted
and paralysed the Kauravas;
suddenly, he attacked again.

18 His sharp arrows sped like trained birds;
the sky
was filled with a swarm
of blood-sucking arrows.

19 O rājā! His arrows in the sky
were like sunrays
concentrated in a small pot.
They were for too many to be counted.

20 The Kauravas had barely chance
to get a fleeting glimpse
of Arjuna's chariot before his arrows
struck them fatally.

21 The flesh-forms of his enemies
could not block Bībhatsu-Arjuna's arrows,
the army-formations
could not block his chariot.

22 He wrought havoc in their ranks
in the same way
that the countless-fanged serpent Ananta
agitates the cosmic waters.

23 The twanging noise of Kirīṭin-Arjuna's arrows
was such
that none had heard so terrifying a clamour
in their lives.

24 The war-elephants stood pierced
with innumerable arrows,
like massive clouds shot through
with glinting sun-rays.

25 Whirling in all directions with incredible swiftness,
shooting right and left,
Arjuna's bow looked
like a circular maṇḍala.

26 They eye does not pause
on what is not beautiful;
Arjuna's arrows did not fall
on what the Gāṇḍīva did not aim.

27 Like a thousand elephants on the march
smashing a way through thick jungle
Kirīṭin-Arjuna's chariot drove
through the Kuru-ranks.

28 Harassed by Pārtha-Arjuna, his enemies wondered:
Has Śakra-Indra himself come with the gods
to help Arjuna
and destroy us?

29 Some began wondering if Arjuna
was not all-consuming Kāla himself,
disguised as Kuntī's son,
annihilating the world.

30 Mangled by Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows,
the Kaurava warriors
lay strewn on the field, dead or dying
of astonishing attack.

31 He sliced the heads of his enemies
like *aṣadhi*-plants.
Fear of Arjuna sapped the vitality
of the Kauravas.

32 Uprooted by the Arjuna-storm,
Arjuna's tree-foes thudded
on the ground,
their purplish sap drenching the soil.

33 The blood-coagulated dust,
blown by gusts of wind,
blotted the sky, empurpling
even the rays of the sun.

34 It seemed as if the sun was setting
in the *saṁdhyā*-empurpled sky.
The evening sun sets, but Arjuṇa's arrows
shower ceaselessly.

35 In that wonderful battle,
the incalculably energetic hero
employed his divine weapons
against the brave Kaurava archers.

36 He fired seventy razor-keen arrows
at Droṇa,
ten at Duḥsaha, eight at Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman,

37 Twelve at Duḥśāsana, three at Kṛpa,
son of Śaradvat,
six at Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
and one hundred
at rājā Duryodhana;
he fired a *karṇi* arrow at Karṇa.

38 He killed Karṇa's horses and charioteer,
and unchārioted him.
With all-weapons-expert Karṇa defeated,
the Kauravas fled.

39 Seeing the Kauravas decimated,
and eager to know
what Pārtha-Arjuna intended further,
Virāṭa's son said on the field:

40 "Advise me, O Jiṣṇu,
where will this charioteer
of this magnificent chariot drive you now?
Which Kaurava flank?"

41 Arjuna said: "Uttara,
the great hero you see, there,
driven by russet horses,
blue banner waving, dressed in tiger-skin,

42 Is Kṛpa – and that segment consists
of his troops.
Drive me there. I will show him my dexterity
in weapons.

43 That hero there, whose banner has the emblem
of a lovely waterpot,
is ācārya Droṇa,
the greatest of arms-wielders.

44 I and all other arms-wielders
grant him the highest respect.
Half-circle your chariot respectfully
round this serene mahā-heroic teacher.

45 Let us bow to him,
for that is the eternal Sanātana Dharma.
If Droṇa is the first to strike me
physically,
I will return the blow.
This he will not mind.

46 Next to him, with the banner sporting
a bow-emblem,
is the ācārya's son,
the mahā-chariot-warrior Aśvatthāman,

47 Who also deserves my respect,
and that of all arms-wielders.
When you come near him,
continue backing the chariot.

48 The hero in the chariot, wearing gold armour,
surrounded by one-third
of the crack troops
of the Kaurava army,

49 Whose banner shows an elephant
on a gold background,
is the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Śrīmān rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

50 Drive this chariot,
that can pulverise all other chariots,
in front of that rājā –
he is an irrepressible crusher of his foes.

51 In weapon-skills he is applauded
as the greatest of Droṇa's disciples.
I will show him
my superior skills!

52 The chariot-warrior whose banner shows
an elephant-binding rope
is Vikartana's son Karṇa,
whom you know.

53 Approach the chariot of this wicked-ātmaned
son of Rādhā warily,
because he is filled with envy
for me.

54 The warrior whose blue banner
displays five stars,
who sits majestic with a bow,
wearing finger-protectors,

55 Whose flagstaff dazzles like the sun
and the stars,
whose head is shaded
by an enormous white umbrella,

56 Who leads a mahā-array of chariots
flying different flags and pennants,
who dazzles
like the sun through clouds,

57 Whose golden armour shines
like the sun or moon,
the golden-helmeted hero
who makes me afraid,

58 Is the son of Śāntanu – Pitāmaha,
our common grandfather.
He obeys Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
he is accorded royal honour.

59 Take the chariot to him last of all.
He will least obstruct me.
Mind the horses well
when I clash with him."

60 O rājā! These were the instructions
ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna gave
to Virāṭa's son, who drove Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's
chariot warily towards war-eager Kṛpa.

SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 The soldiers of the massive Kaurava army
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
moved slowly like rain clouds
pushed by a mild wind.

2 On either side marched the protecting ranks
of cavalry,
and awesome-looking armour-guarded elephants
driven by expert riders
who urged them on
with hooks and goads.

3 O rājā! Śakra-Indra himself arrived
in a handsome chariot,
accompanied by gods,
Viśvadevas and Maruts.

4 The entire sky, swarming with gods,
yakṣas, gandharvas and nāgas,
shone like a cloudless maṇḍala
of stars.

5 The gods arrived in their chariots
to witness
the dreadful battle between Arjuna
and Kṛpa,
and to assess the quality
of their missiles.

6 Adorned with hundreds of thousands
of golden pillars,
decorated with pearls and jewels
like a palace,

Transcreated by P. Lal

7 The will-energised celestial chariot of Indra,
the rājā of the gods,
glittering with precious gems,
scintillated in the clear sky.

8 All the thirty-three classes of deities were present,
headed by Vāsava-Indra,
also gandharvas, rākṣasas, serpents,
pitṛs, mahā-ṛṣis,

9 Rājā Vasumanas, Balākṣa, Supratardana,
Aṣṭaka, Śibi, Yayāti, Nahuṣa, Gaya,

10 Manu, Purū, Raghu, Bhānu, Kṛṣava, Sagara, Nala –
All giving lustre to the chariot of the rājā of the gods.

11 Agni, Īśa, Soma, Varuṇa, Prajāpati,
Dhātā, Vidhātā, Kubera, and Yama,

12 Alambuṣa, Ugrasena, the gandharva Tumburu,
And many others arrived in splendid chariots.

13 All the gods, the Siddhas, the supreme ṛṣis came
To watch the battle between Arjuna and the Kauravas.

14 O Bharata descendant! The sacred fragrance
of their celestial garlands
spread like the scent of flowering trees
when spring arrives.

15 The umbrellas, dresses, flagstaffs, fans
and the jewels
of the gods all shone with exquisite
and enchanting effulgence.

16 The dust of the earth cleared,
and a celestial radiance
hung on the field. The wind-wafted fragrance
pleased the warriors.

17 The sky glowed with an eerie light
as the gods came,
loaded with all manner of gems
and riches,

18 Chariot after chariot adding
to the growing glory.
Surrounded by the gods,
the mighty thunderbolt-wielder, Indra,

19 Lotus-and-lily-garlanded,
was a vision of mahā-radiant enchantment.
He looked continually at his son,
and he remained unsatiated.

SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 Pārtha-Arjuna, son of Pāṇḍu,
saw the army of the Kauravas
mobilised for battle (said Vaiśampāyana),
and ordered Virāṭa's son Uttara:

2 "Drive me to Kṛpa, Śaradvat's son;
he is located
to the south of the chariot
with the *jāmbū*-gold-altar banner."

3 Virāṭa's son wasted no time in responding
to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's words,
and urging his gold-caparisoned,
silver-bright horses.

4 One by one he encouraged,
to even swifter speeds,
the snorting horses
glistening as bright as the moon.

5 Skilled in the handling of horses,
Uttara plunged into the Kaurava ranks,
then suddenly withdrew
his wind-swift horses.

6 The expert Matsya charioteer
sometimes wheeled in half-circles,
sometimes did a complete maṇḍala,
baffling the Kauravas.

7 In one of his approaches,
performing *pradakṣiṇa* around Kṛpa's chariot,
the fearless son of Virāṭa
faced Kṛpa himself.

8 Arjuna immediately blew on his mahā-conch,
the magnificent Devadatta,
and thunderously proclaimed
his presence.

9 Arjuna blowing on that conch
produced a mahā-reverberation
that sounded like thunder
pealing on distant mountains.

10 The Kauravas were awe-struck
by the fact
that the conch did not splinter
into a hundred pieces.

11 The peals vibrated into the sky and back
and the noise
was that of Maghavat-Indra's thunderbolt
striking a mountain.

12 Inspired by that tremendous noise,
and eager to fight
the powerful, irrepressible Kṛpa,
Saradvat's son Kṛpa,
who was driven desperate
by the pealing conch,

13 Arjuna attacked, even as the mahā-chariot-hero
son of Saradvat
picked up his own ocean-born conch
and blew on it.

14 The noise seemed to shatter
the three worlds.
Kṛpa lifted his massive bow
and powerfully twanged it.

15 Both the mahā-powerful chariot-warriors
were sun-effulgent –
they fought with each other
like two glorious autumn clouds.

16 Śaradvat's son was the first to wound
foe-crushing Pārtha-Arjuna
with ten swift, life-annihilating,
sharp arrows.

17 Pulling taut his world-renowned massive
Gāṇḍīva-bow,
Pārtha-Arjuna countered
with many marrow-slicing iron arrows.

18 Kṛpa shattered those blood-sucking arrows
before they struck
by his own sharp *nārāca*-shafts,
they splintered into thousands of fragments.

19 Propelled by anger,
Arjuna moved with confusing speed,
and darkened the sky
with an arrow shower;
everywhere were only the arrows
of the mahā-chariot-hero Arjuna.

20 Pārtha-Arjuna pinned Kṛpa down
with hundreds of flame-tipped arrows
that drove Kṛpa
into a blinding rage.

21 He let loose ten thousand arrows suddenly
on mahātmā Pārtha-Arjuna
and screamed out
a battle-cry.

22 Arjuna, unperturbed,
picked up his Gāṇḍīva-bow
and assailed his opponent
by suddenly aiming and shooting

23 Four fearful, straight, gold-winged arrows
that sped like flaming *pannaga*-snakes
towards Kṛpa's horses.
The horses panicked,
and suddenly leapt up,
throwing Kṛpa off balance.

24 Seeting Gautama-Kṛpa unchArioted,
Kuntī's son, foe-slaying Arjuna,
refrained from further insult
to the honour of Kṛpa.

25 Gautama-Kṛpa recovered, re-mounted his chariot,
and swiftly shot
ten sharp, *kaṅka*-feathered arrows
at ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna.

26 One sharp arrow of Arjuna's
sliced Krpa's bow
and finger-protectors:
it was an arrow called the *bhalla*.

27 Next he neatly ripped apart Kṛpa's armour
with marrow-piercing arrows,
but taking great care
not to wound him.

28 Armour-less, Kṛpa's body
looked like a sloughed-off snake's.
It glowed with the eerie beauty
of a skin-less snake.

29 One bow splintered, Gautama-Kṛpa picked up another
and quickly
prepared it for shooting.
He looked magnificent as he did this.

30 But Kuntī's son succeeded
in slicing that bow also
with centre-depressed arrows,
One by one the son of Pāṇḍu
shredded other bows that were picked up
by Śāradvat-Kṛpa.

31 With all his bows shattered,
illustrious Kṛpa hurled
a lightning-powerful chariot-*śakti*-spear
at the son of Pāṇḍu.

32 As the golden missile whizzed
through the sky
like a long, dazzling mahā-meteor,
Arjuna sliced it with ten arrows.

33 The fragments of the pulverised
śakti fell on the ground.

34 Kṛpa immediately readied another bow
and shot ten *bhalla*-arrows
at Arjuna,
successfully pinning him down.

35 Pārtha-Arjuna, fuming with anger,
lifted his bow and fired
thirteen mahā-radiant stone-sharpened arrows
at Kṛpa.

36 One smashed the yoke of the chariot,
four immobilised the four horses,
the sixth decapitated
the charioteer.

37 The mahā-chariot-hero used three arrows
to slice
the three bamboo poles,
and two to destroy the wheels.

38 The twelfth arrow brought down the banner,
and with the thunderbolt-like thirteenth
Phālguna-Arjuna smiled
and pierced Kṛpa's chest.

39 His bow pulverised, his horses slaughtered,
his chariot demolished,
Kṛpa grasped a mace
and pounced upon Arjuna.

40 The bright, highly-polished mace,
flung by Kṛpa at Arjuna,
was repulsed by a hail
of carefully aimed arrows.

41 In a bid to rescue Śaradvat's son Kṛpa,
who was bent on revenge,
the Kaurava soldiers deluged Arjuna
with arrows.

42 But Virāṭa's son Uttara skilfully manipulated
the chariot
in *yamaka*-maṇḍala patterns swerving left,
and eluded the attack.

43 The bull-brave Kauravas then retreated
from the onslaught
of Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
taking uncharioted Kṛpa with them to safety.

SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 Vaiśampāyana continued : With Kṛpa removed,
unsuppressable red-horsed Śoṇāśva-Droṇa
lifted his arrow-set bow and attacked
white-horsed Śvetavāhana-Arjuna.

2 Arjuna saw his guru bearing down
in a golden chariot;
the finest of victorious heroes Arjuna
said to Uttara:

3 "Charioteer, may luck favour you!
Drive me towards
the chariot of Droṇa, whose chariot
displays a tall flagstaff
on which waves the emblem
of a golden *vedī*-altar.

4 He rides in that magnificent chariot
drawn by large,
reddish-brown, handsome, perfectly-trained
pleasing-to-the-eye,
disciplined horses
whose necks have the burnish of copper.

5 The mighty-armed, mahā-energetic
beauty-gifted and strength-endowed
son of Bharadvāja
is famous the world over.

6 His intelligence is like Uśanas-Śukra's,
his knowledge of justice like Bṛhaspati's.
He practises brahmacarya
and is steeped in the four Vedas.

7 He is acquainted with the techniques
of discharging and retrieving
divine weapons,
and he is absolute master of archery.

8 Fortitude, self-discipline, truth-speaking,
non-injury, simplicity–
these and othergunas can be found
in the twice-born one.

9 Let me today meet that mahā-fortunate being
in battle!
Drive me, Uttara, to where my revered ācārya
stands!"

10 On Arjuna's request, the son of Virāṭa
propelled the gold-caparisoned horses
towards the chariot
of Bharadvāja's son Droṇa.

11 Droṇa drove straight at Pāṇḍu's son,
the finest of chariot-warriors
who was himself driving headlong
like a musth elephant.

12 Droṇa blew into his conch,
which pealed like a hundred trumpets.
The whole army shuddered
like the waves of the ocean.

13 Watching the reddish horses blurring
on the field
with Arjuna's *haṁsa*-white and mind-swift horses,
the soldiers marvelled.

14 Seeing the two chariots
on the field of battle,
those of ācārya and disciple,
both brave and noble-minded,

15 Both unsuppressable,
mahā-powerful Droṇa and Pārtha-Arjuna,
the massive ranks of the Bharatas
trembled with fear.

16 Manoeuvring his chariot beside Droṇa's,
the mahā-chariot-warrior Arjuna
was delighted.
He smiled

17 And offered his respects; then Kuntī's son,
crusher-of-foes Arjuna,
mahā-muscled hero,
said these sweet and gentle words:

18 "We have passed our exile in the forest,
we are bent on taking revenge.
Do not be angry,
O battle-scarred one!

19 O faultless one, I will strike you only
if you strike first.
This is my decision.
The rest is up to you."

20 Droṇa immediately fired
more than twenty arrows,
which nimble-handed Pārtha-Arjuna intercepted
in mid-air.

21 Droṇa brandished all his weapons,
and deluged
the chariot of Arjuna
with thousands of arrows.

22 Seeming to rouse Arjuna to retaliate,
matchlessly-powerful Droṇa
shot sharp, *kaṅka*-feathered arrows
at Pārtha-Arjuna's horses.

23 In the clash between Bhāradvāja-Droṇa
and diadem-decked Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
both combatants employed
equally powerful and fiery arrows.

24 Both were equally radiant,
both were swift as the wind,
both hugely energetic,
both skilled in divine weapons.

25 All the soldiers who stood
on the battlefied
witnessing the arrows-combat murmured,
"Sādhu Sādhu! Excellent! Excellent!

26 Who but Phālguna-Arjuna
dares face Droṇa on the battlefield?
Look at awesome Kṣatriya-dharma –
guru fighting disciple!"
Such were the sentiments of the warriors
on the battlefield.

27 The anger-filled mahā-muscled heroes
faced each other, invincible-seeming,
each eager to win, each shooting arrows
at the other.

28 Anger-roused Drona, son of Bharadvāja,
lifted his gold-plated,
difficult-to-bend bow
and attacked Phālguna-Arjuna

29 He released a large number
of sun-dazzling arrows
at Arjuna's chariot;
they blotted the rays of the sun.

30 The mighty-armed chariot-warrior
wounded Arjuna
with his sharp arrows
that felt like hail on a hill.

31 Picking up the excellent heavy bow,
the Gāṇḍīva
that could destroy enemies,
the son of Pāṇḍu happily

32 Fired golden arrows at Droṇa,
first repulsing the swarm of arrows
of Bharadvāja's son.
His own arrows
were no less marvellous
than the ones fired by Droṇa.

33 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
was a fascinating sight
as he fought, brandishing his weapons
in all directions.

34 His thick volley of arrows
darkened the sky,
and Droṇa could not be seen;
a fog seemed to cover him.

35 The magnificent gold arrows surrounding him
made Droṇa
look like a hill that had burst
in a mass of flame.

36 Seeing his chariot trapped in a shower
of Arjuna-arrows,
Droṇa lifted his massive,
cloud-roaring bow.

37 A veritable wheel of fire,
a fierce *agni-cakra*;
the warrior Droṇa shot a hail
of sharp arrows.

38 A crackling noise resounded
Like splitting burning bamboos.

39 The incalculably powerful one shrouded
the quarters and the sun
with gold-winged arrows
shot from his colourful bow.

40 Those gold-winged, centre-depressed shafts
sped through the sky
like a formation
of exquisite birds.

41 They sped, wingtip to wingtip;
the arrows from Droṇa's bow
looked like a continuous,
endless arrow-stream.

42 Both the warriors employed
their gold-feathered mahā-arrows
like burning torches
to cover the entire sky.

43 The *kaṅka*-bird-feathered arrows
flew through the sky
like a flock of *haṁsa*-swans
on an autumn day.

44 A horrendous battle locked
mahātmā Droṇa and Pāṇḍava-Arjuna,
resembling that between
Vāsava-Indra and Vṛtra.

45 They mauled each other with arrows
fired from fully taut bows,
like two elephants thrusting
fiercely with tusks.

46 In full battle-dress,
the two angry heroes
fought according to rules,
brandishing divine weapons.

47 Ever-victorious Arjuna utilised
his own sharp arrows
to repulse the arrows
of his ācārya.

48 He was a warrior of tremendous valour;
displaying his weapons,
he blanketed the sky
with arrows.

49 The excellent ācārya Droṇa,
seeing tiger-among-men Arjuna
fatally firing arrows,
kept him a bay
with a playful barrage
of fiery centre-depressed shafts.

50 Bharadvāja's son succeeded in repulsing
the divine weapons
of Phālguna-Arjuna with an armoury
of his own divine weapons.

51 Both those inflamed lions-among-men
fought on the field
with the ferocity of gods fighting
the Dānava anti-gods.

52 Pāṇḍava-Arjuna time and again used his weapons
to check
the Indra-, Vāyu-, and Agni-weapons
hurled by Droṇa.

53 The sharp arrows of the two heroes
transformed the sky
into one dark shadowy mass
of arrow-clouds.

54 Arjuna's arrows thudded on the bodies
of his enemies
like lightning striking
a gigantic mountain.

55 And elephants, horses and chariots,
streaming with blood,
looked like flames-of-the-forest in full bloom.
O lord-of-the-earth Janamejaya,

56 The field was littered
with bangle-decorated arm-stumps,
golden armours of mahā-chariot-heroes,
banners torn and tattered,

57 Soldiers fatally mutilated by the arrows
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
in that Arjuna-Droṇa encounter.
The soldiers were all stupefied.

58 Aiming their strain-resisting bows,
both went on shooting arrows,
continuously harassing and wounding
each other.

59 The battle between Droṇa and Kaunteya-Arjuna,
O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya,
resembled the tremendous battle between
Bali and Vāsava-Indra.

60 Shooting centre-depressed arrows, they fought,
risking their lives,
they shot knotted shafts
from fully taut bows.

61 A sky-voice was suddenly heard,
praising Droṇa:
Droṇa performs magnificently
in his duel with Arjuna,

62 *A mahā-chariot-hero irrepressible,*
maha-valiant, sure-handed,
whose foe-crushing abilities extend
to defeating gods and Dānava-antigods.

63 The accuracy, discipline, swiftness of attack
and nimbleness of response,
the range of Pārtha-Arjuna
impressed Droṇa greatly.

64 Lifting the divine Gāṇḍīva-bow on the field,
O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya,
brave Pārtha-Arjuna stretched it
and aimed.

65 His arrows flew out like swarms of *śalabha*-locusts
and all watching marvelled, saying,
"*Sādhu! Sādhu!* Excellent! Excellent!"
in pūjā-respect.

66 So thick were the arrows there was no space
between them for air to flow.
Pārtha-Arjuna continued shooting
with incredible speed,
almost without interruption
between shots.

67 And so, in that fierce battle
of fearful weapons,
Pārtha-Arjuna kept up a ceaseless flow
of varied missiles.

68 Almost all together, hundreds of thousands
of knotted arrows
flew towards and struck the chariot
of Droṇa.

69 Seeing Droṇa obscured by the arrows
fired from the Gāṇḍīva.
the soldiers in maha-despair
shouted "Hari! Hai!"

70 And Maghavat-Indra had the highest pūjā-praise
for the dexterity
of Arjuna's bowcraft,
as did the apsarās and gandharvas.

71 Assisted by a formidable mahā-array
of chariots,
the son of the ācārya, Aśvatthāman,
surrounded Pāṇḍava-Arjuna.

72 Though furious with Arjuna,
Aśvatthāman cherished
the greatest pūjā-praise for the feats
of mahātmā Pārtha-Arjuna.

73 Propelled by anger, he clashed
with Parthā-Arjuna and delayed him
with a cloud-like conglomeration
of watery arrows.

74 Then he offered protection to Droṇa
by manoeuvring his chariot.
around mahā-muscled Arjuna,
giving Droṇa a chance to escape.

75 Droṇa seized the chance and,
with his armour and banner destroyed,
himself arrow-hit,
he retreated in his swift-horsed chariot.

SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 Mahārāja! Now it was the turn of Droṇa's son
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
to clash with Pārtha-Arjuna who,
with the swiftness of wind,
released a stormy downpour of arrows
on Aśvatthāman.

2 The battle that followed was one
that resembled gods and anti-gods clashing.
Their arrows flew like those
of Vāsava-Indra and Vṛtra.

3 The sun stopped shining,
the wind stopped blowing,
The sky was shrouded
with an arrow-thick darkness.

4 And when the two opponents clashed,
the deafening noise of their encounter
sounded like bamboos
splitting in a blazing fire.

5 O rājā! Arjuna first incapacitated
the horses of Aśvatthāman,
so bewildering them
that they lost all sense of direction.

6 The mahā-valiant son of Droṇa
soon detected a weak spot
and with an arrow he sliced
Pārtha-Arjuna's bowstring.
The gods witnessed and applauded
this superhuman feat.

7 Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Karṇa
and the mahā-chariot-warrior Kṛpa
also pūjā-praised the deed, saying,
"Excellent! Excellent!"

8 Aiming his magnificent bow,
the son of Droṇa again pierced
the bull-brave chariot-hero Arjuna's chest
with *kaṅka*-feathered shafts.

9 But Pārthā-Arjuna laughed uproariously;
the mahā-muscled son of Pṛtha-Kuntī
quickly re-strung
his massive Gāṇḍīva-bow.

10 He bent the bow to crescent-shape
and moved forward
as would one musth head-elephant
against another.

11 A fearful horripilating encounter followed
between these two heroes
who were unmatched
on earth.

12 The spellbound Kauravas saw those
two mahā powerful heroes
charging
like two massive leader-elephants.

13 The two bull-brave earth-heroes
fought each other
with flaming arrows
that sped like *pannaga*-snakes.

14 The mahātmā son of Pāṇḍu carried
two inexhaustible divine quivers,
so he remained firm
as a mountain.

15 Aśvatthāman soon exhausted his quiver.
Having fired all his arrows,
he proved an easy target
for Arjuna.

16 It was then that Karṇa stretched his massive bow
to its limit and twanged it.
All watching him
applauded "Hai! Hai!"

17 Pārtha-Arjuna swerved to see
who had twanged his bow
and spotted the son of Rādhā;
this infuriated Arjuna even more.

18 Driven by anger and eager to kill Karṇa,
the bull-brave Kaurava-Arjuna
opened his eyes wide
and stared at Karṇa.

19 Pārtha-Arjuna steered his chariot away
from the son of Droṇa, O rājā Janamejaya;
and the Kaurava soldiers quickly supplied Aśvatthāman
with thousands of fresh arrows.

20 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna placed the son of Droṇa
behind him;
conqueror-of-enemies Arjuna concentrated
on Karṇa alone.

21 Rushing at Karṇa in hope of a chariot-duel,
the son of Kuntī's eyes
flamed in anger
as he said:

SECTION SIXTY

1 "Karṇa, the time has come for you
to make good
your boast in the sabhā,
'None equals me in battle!'

2 Fight me in the field today,
O Karṇa,
and discover your power.
No need for further boasts!

3 You disregarded dharma,
and spoke many harsh words.
I have a feeling
you will have a hard time today.

4 Fight me today! O Rādhā's son!
Fight me in front of these Kauravas!
Prove the insults
that you heaped on me earlier!

5 Time now for you to reap the fruit
of permitting the wicked-ātmaned rascal
to drag- Pāñcāli-Draupadī
inside the sabhā!

6 Tied in the noose of dharma,
I could not take revenge earlier.
Rādheya-Karṇa! Today you will see
my repressed anger burst forth.

7 Ill-minded one, we have suffered
in the forest for twelve years.
Today the fruit
of angry vengeance ripens!

8 Come, Karṇa, fight with me today
on the field,
and let the Kauravas and your soldiers
witness the battle!"

9 "Why don't you carry out you what you say?"
replied Karṇa.
"Pārtha-Arjuna! Everyone knows
you talk much, you do little.

10 The fact that you suffered so far
shows your weakness –
that is all I can see
in your pmpous words today.

11 You suffered then
because the dharma-noose tied you;
you are still tied by it –
you only *think* you are free.

12 You spent your exile pursuing dharma and artha
and, weakened by your pursuit,
you still dare
to challenge me!

13 Let Śakra-Indra himself come and help you,
Pārtha-Arjuna.
He cannot prevent me from showing the prowess
that I possess.

14 Son of Kuntī, consider your desire
as fulfilled.
You will fight me today
and you will taste my strength."

15 "So far," said Arjuna, "you have always
avoided confronting me.
So you are alive. But your younger brother
is dead, Rādheya-Karṇa.

16 You saw your younger brother die
and could not save him.
Who but you could do that
and still continue to boast?"

17 Saying this, invincible dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna again attacked Karṇa,
firing arrows capable of penetrating
thick armour.

18 Karṇa lightheartedly repulsed
that heavy shower of arrows
that descended on the mahā-chariot hero
like thick black clouds.

19 Karṇa's fierce crisscrossing net of arrows
blocked off Arjuna on all sides,
piercing his horses, arms,
and finger-protectors.

20 Upset by Karṇa's counter-attack,
Arjuna shot a razor-keen straight arrow
that sliced
through Karṇa's bowstring.

21 Swiftly nocking a succession of new arrows
to another bow,
Karṇa wounded Arjuna's hand,
weakening Pāṇḍava-Arjuna's bow-grip.

22 But mahā-muscled Arjuna succeeded
in disintegrating Karṇa's bow.
Karṇa retaliated with a *śakti*-spear,
which Pārtha-Arjuna shredded.

23 The heroes accompanying Rādheya-Karṇa drove up
and attacked Arjuna,
who killed them all with arrows
from his Gāṇḍīva.

24 Next, Bībhatsu-Arjuna aimed his sharp arrows
at the horses of Karṇa,
pulling his bow ear-taut;
they collapsed, fatally wounded.

25 Aiming a mahā-powerful, sharp, fiery shaft,
Arjuna fired at Karṇa,
Kuntī's brave son wounded Karṇa
in the chest.

26 The arrow ripped
through Karṇa's coat of mail,
and lodged in his flesh,
rendering him almost unconscious.

27 He left the field in great agony,
escaping north.
The mahā-chariot-heroes Arjuna and Uttara
both made fun of him.

SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 Defeating Vikartana's son Karṇa,
Arjuna said to Virāṭa's son Uttara:
"Drive me to the ranks
under the gold palm-tree banner

2 That belongs to our grandfather Bhīṣma,
son of Śāntanu;
god-like he waits in his chariot,
eager to do battle."

3 Uttara saw a massive army of chariots,
horses and elephants.
Uttara, suffering from the effects of arrow wounds,
said to Pārtha-Arjuna:

4 "Brave one, I cannot any more control
the excellent horses.
My life-breath seems to be running out;
I am shaking.

5 The ten directions seem to be dissolving
under the impact
of the divine missiles used by you
and the Kauravas.

6 The stench of flesh, blood and fat
makes me giddy.
Your remarkable feats have divided
my mind in two.

7 Never have I seen such a hero-horde
on the battlefield.
The cacophony of thudding maces,
of pealing conches,

8 Of heroes yelling their war-cries,
of elephants trumpeting,
of the Gāṇḍīva-bow twanging
like flashes of lightning,
has numbed my power to hear
and recall with clarity.

9 When I saw your perform a maṇḍala
on the battlefield
as you stretched taut your Gāṇḍīva,
my vision blurred,
it bloated, and my heart seemed
to be bursting.

10 Your awe-inspiring presence on the field,
like that of Pinākin-Śiva,
the angered trident-wielder,
and your fearful arrows have unnerved me.

11 I cannot distinguish when you slide the arrow out,
when you nock it,
and when you shoot it.
You blur in front of my eyes.

12 My life-breath is fading,
the earth seems to fall from under me.
I do not have the strength
to manage the horses."

13 "Take heart," said Arjuna. "Steady yourself.
O bull-brave hero,
you have today done wonders
on the field of battle.

14 May fortune continue to favour you!
You are a prince of Matsya,
born to defeat your foes.
Prince! Do not despair.

15 Prince! Stand firm in my chariot
and summon your reserve of energy,
and continue to guide my horses
on the battlefield."

16 Finest-of-men mahā-muscled Arjuna
spoke in this manner to the son of Virāṭa
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
he added;

17 "Drive me quickly to where Bhīṣma stands
commanding his huge army.
I will slice his bowstring
on the battlefield.

18 You will see my radiant divine weapons
on the battlefield today,
flickering like lightning
among dark clouds.

19 The Kauravas will see
my gold-plated Gāṇḍīva-bow.
"Does he shoot with his left hand
or his right?'

20 The mystified Kauravas will gather and wonder.
I will today
cause a gory river to flow
to the other world,
blood its water, elephants its sharks,
chariots its currents.

21 I will shoot knotted arrows today
and lop off the Kaurava forces
whose branches are hands; feet, backs;
heads, arms.

22 I will rout the Kauravas singlehanded
with my bow –
I will be a forest-fire opening up
a hundred paths.

23 My arrows will spin the Kauravas around
like a wheel.
You will see my finest skill in bowcraft
and other weapons.

24 Rough ground or smooth,
I stand firm in my chariot.
My winged arrows can pierce
even sky-touching mountains.

25 On instructions from Indra,
I once killed
hundreds of thousands of Paulomas and Kālakhañjas
on the battlefield.

26 I learnt bow-grip from Indra,
sure aim from Brahmā,
and different critical war manoeuvres
from Prajāpati.

27 I annihilated sixty thousand warriors
of the chariot
who lived in Hiraṇyapura,
on the other side of the ocean.

28 Watch me today
as I disperse the innumerable Kauravas
like a fierce wind
scattering wisps of cotton.

29 Watch my arrows set fire
to the Kaurava forest today,
where trees are banners, soldiers shrubs,
chariots the lion-predators.

30 Watch me today, like the thunder-wielder
Vajrapāṇi-Indra routing anti-gods,
as I use my straight arrows
to kill the Kauravas
in their chariot-nests,
as they desperately fight their best.

31 From Rudra-Śiva
I obtained the *raudra*-missile
from Varuṇa the *vāruṇa*, from Agni the *āgneya*,
from Mātarisvan-Vāyu the *vāyavya*,
and from Śakra-Indra the thunderbolt
and other weapons.

32 I will uproot the entire Dhṛtarāṣṭra-forest,
though it is guarded
by lion-like men.
Uttara, stop being afraid!"

33 Assured and inspired by ambidexterous Savyasācī-
Arjuna (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Uttara proceeded
to the Bhīṣma-guarded chariot-ranks.

34 Mahā-muscled Arjuna,
bent on the destruction of the Kaurava forces,
was blocked
by the river-born cruel warrior Bhīṣma.

35 Swiftly advancing, he shot an arrow
that cut the banner of Bhīṣma.
It teetered,
then fell on the earth.

36 Mahā-powerful, wearing beautiful garlands
and ornaments,
expert in the use of war-weapons,
gifted with intelligence, four warriors –

37 Duḥśāsana, Vikarṇa,
Duḥsaha and Viviṁśati
combined to withstand the attack
of dreadful-deed-doer bow-expert Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

38 Wounding the son of Virāṭa
with a *bhalla*-arrow,
brave Duḥśāsana fired a second *bhalla*
at Arjuna's chest.

39 Jiṣṇu-Arjuna replied with a dangerous,
highly-polished, sharp,
vulture-winged arrow
what tore through Duḥśāsana's golden bow.

40 Five more arrows of Pārtha-Arjuna
struck him on his chest.
Severely wounded, he was forced
to leave the field.

41 With piercing, straight, vulture-winged arrows
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Vikarṇa
succeeded in wounding
foe-humiliating Arjuna.

42 But the son of Kuntī also wounded Vikarṇa
in the forehead
with straight arrows,
hitting him so hard that he collapsed.

43 Intent on rescuing their brother,
Duḥśāsana and Viviṁśati
manoeuvred round Arjuna and ringed him
with sharp arrows.

44 Unperturbed, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna immobilised
both of them
by shooting two sharp vulture-feathered arrows
that felled their horses.

45 Their horses butchered, themselves wounded,
the two sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
were removed from the field
in other chariots.

46 Unvanquished-in-war Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
Kuntī's mahā-powerful son,
the diadem-wearing, perfect-aiming hero
kept up his attack.

SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 The warriors of the Kaurava army
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
decided to join forces in a concerted attack
on Kuntī's son.

2 Supremely energetic Arjuna straddled
the mahā-chariot-heroes
with arrows that fell as thick as snow
on the summits of mountains.

3 Elephants trumpeting, horses neighing,
bheri-drums and conches
bursting into deafening peals –
a horrendous commotion!

4 Arrow-nets from Pārtha-Arjuna's bow
ripped through the hides
of elephants and horses,
piercing iron coats of mail.

5 As he stood there shooting his arrows,
the son of Pāṇḍu
looked like the resplendent sun
on a clear autumn noon.

6 The fear-struck chariot-warriors
began abandoning their chariots,
horsemen leapt from horses
and the foot-soldiers scattered.

7 When the arrows of mahātmā Arjuna
tore through copper,
silver and iron armour,
there rose a wail of despair.

8 Corpses of soldiers littered the field of battle
beside bodies
of arrow-felled riders of horses
and elephants.

9 The earth was a mass of corpses
of chariot-warriors.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, bow in hand,
seemed to dance on the battlefield.

[IV:62:10-18]

Transcreated by P. Lal

10 The thunderous twang of the bow
injected such fear
in the hearts of the soldiers
that they fled without warning.

11 Some fell, fatally hit,
their heads rolled on the ground,
flashing with earrings, helmets,
and gold necklaces.

12 And all that was visible on the field of battle
was a mass
of mutilated bodies, bow-clutching hands,
ornamented arms.

13 The clutter of heads, severed by arrows,
toppled on the earth, O bull-brave Bharata,
like a shower of hailstones
out of a clear sky.

14 Fearful-famed Arjuna dominated
the field of battle,
displaying his complete mastery
over his divine missiles.

15 For thirteen years Pārtha-Arjuna
had severely restrained himself.
Now he let loose his suppressed anger
at the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
terrifying them
with his awesome destructiveness.

16 Terra-stricken, the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
stood in front of Duryodhana,
dumbfounded
at the continuing devastation.

17 Terrifying the Kaurava army
and routing the mahā-chariot-warriors,
finest-of-victors Arjuna dominated
the battlefield.

18 A Kāla-created river of blood began to flow,
like that at the end of a yuga:
mushy marrow its moss,
corpse-hair its reeds,

19 Elephants its islands, coats of mail and helmets
choking its surface –
a frightening and sickening spectacle
of death.

20 Fat, blood, and marrow
made up its churning currents.
Weird animals screamed and roared
in this river.

21 The sharp war-weapons were its sharks,
flesh-eating creatures revelled in it,
pearl-strings its ripples,
ornaments its bubbles,

22 Arrow its eddies, elephants its crocodiles;
an impossible-to-cross river,
a river whose mahā-chariots
were its mahā-islands,
reverberating with the blaring of conches
and *dundubhi*-drums.

23 Pārtha-Arjuna created this hard-to-cross river.
No one could even see
when Arjuna lifted, strung, and fired
his Gāṇḍīva-bow.

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 Duryodhana, Karṇa, Duḥśāsana, Viviṁśati,
Droṇa, the mahā-chariot-warrior Kṛpa
and Aśvatthāman
(continued Vaiśampāyana),

2 Brandishing their massive bows,
all rushed furiously at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
motivated only by one desire –
to kill him.

3 Mahārāja, standing in his sun-bright
but banner-bereft chariot,
Arjuna the ape-bannered hero
waited for them.

4 Using powerful weapons to pin down
mahā-valiant Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the great chariot-warrior Droṇa,
Karṇa, as well as Kṛpa,

5 Deluged Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
with a veritable downpour of arrows;
they arrived like hosts of clouds
and bewildered him.

6 The Kaurava heroes
kept a safe distance
between themselves and Arjuna
while they renewed their attack.

7 Hemmed in by the onslaught
of divine weapons,
Arjuna did not have two fingers of body-area
visible.

8 But he smiled; the mahā-chariot-hero
dreadful-deed-doer Bibhatsu-Arjuna
fixed the sun-dazzling *Aindra*-missile
to his Gāṇḍīva.

9 Diadem-decorated-Kirīṭamāli Arjuna,
son of Kuntī,
stood on the field shooting arrows
like the sun shooting rays.

10 And the Gāṇḍīva-bow shone like a rainbow
in Arjuna's hands,
like lightning in clouds,
like fire in rock.

11 When it storms heavily,
the sky sparkles with flashes of lightning
and the whole earth
is illuminated;

12 So the flashing arrows from the Gāṇḍīva lit up,
O Bharata Janamejaya,
the ten directions.
Soldiers, cavalry, elephants stood transfixed.

13 They stood in postures of paralysed peace,
their senses gone.
Unwilling to kill any more,
they turned away their faces.

14 O bull-brave Bharata!
The army ranks simply disintegrated.
Losing hope of life,
the soldiers fled helter-skelter.

SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 The majority of the warriors dead
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Bhīṣma, Śāntanu's son, Bharata-patriarch,
rushed at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

2 Brandishing his excellent gold-plated bow
and carrying sharp arrows
capable of sapping
life's very essence.

3 Because a white umbrella shaded his head,
that tiger-among-men Bhīṣma
glowed
like a hill at dawn.

4 He blew his conch and encouraged
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana;
then the son of Gaṅgā attacked
Bībhatsu-Arjuna from the right.

5 Seeing him charging,
the foe-crushing hero, Kuntī's son,
happily welcomed him,
like a hill welcoming a cloud.

6 The hero of illimitable vitality Bhīṣma
shot eight
swift snake-hissing arrows,
aiming at Pārtha-Arjuna's banner.

7 They sped towards the flagstaff
of the son of Pāṇḍu
and hit the screaming ape
and other symbol-creatures on the banner.

8 With a *bhalla*-arrow, Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
succeeded in slicing the staff
of Bhīṣma's umbrella,
which crumpled and fell.

9 More arrows from the son of Kuntī
further smashed the flagstaff,
wounded both his horses,
and the charioteer guarding his flanks.

10 Bhīṣma was aware of Arjuna's greatness.
He chafed;
but he continued to assail Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
with divine mahā-weapons.

11 Incomparably energetic Arjuna
shot a divine missile at Bhīṣma,
and waited,
like a hill welcoming a mahā-cloud.

12 A tremendous, horripilating battle
ensued between Pārtha-Arjuna and Bhīṣma
resembling the clash
between Bali and Vāsava-Indra.

13 The Kaurava ranks stood and witnessed
the great duel
fought with *bhalla*-arrows.
Both the warriors attacked each other,
and their arrows collided like clouds
clashing and bursting.

14 Arjuna shot arrows with his right and left hands.
O rājā,
the Gāṇḍīva-bow
looked like a circle of fire.

15 Kuntī's son shrouded Bhīṣma
with a hail of arrows –
hundreds of them –
like clouds blotting out a mountain.

16 Bhīṣma in turn received the arrows
as a sea-beach
receives the waves of the sea,
and retaliated with his own.

17 The splintered remains of many arrows,
thousands of fragments,
sundered in mid-air,
fell inside Phālguna-Arjuna's chariot.

18 But gold-feathered arrows showered
out of Arjuna's chariot also,
like swarms of insects,
and Bhīṣma did his best
to neutralise them
with a counter-shower of arrows.

19 The Kaurava warriors shouted,
"*Sādhu! Sādhu!* Excellent! Excellent!
Bhīṣma has marvellously withstood
the assault of Arjuna.

20 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna is young,
he is strong and he knows
the science of bowmanship.
Who is there to equal Pārtha-Arjuna

21 Except Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Devakī's son Krishna,
and mahā-powerful ācārya Droṇa,
son of Bharadvāja?"

22 The two bull-brave Bharata heroes
stupefied spectators
with their masterful weapon displays,
as if playing a game.

23 The two mahātmās used
every kind of divine missile,
including such weapons
as the *aindra, prājāpatya,*
āgneya, the fearful *raudra, kaubera,*
vāruṇa and *yāmya.*

24 Any creature who looked
at the two of them fighting felt like exclaiming,
"Excellent, O mahā-muscled Arjuna!
Excellent, O mahā-muscled Bhīṣma!

25 The divine mahā-missiles we see employed
by Pārtha-Arjuna and Bhīṣma
can be seen
in no other place."

26 For some time all-weapons-expert Bhīṣma
and Arjuna
continued their duel with divine missiles;
then they reverted to arrows.

27 Jiṣṇu-Arjuna succeeded in finding an opening
and shot a razor-sharp arrow
which pierced through the golden bow
of Bhīṣma.

28 In the twinkling of an eye,
mahā-powerful mahā-chariot-hero Bhīṣma
picked up another bow, strung it,
and released an incredibly fierce volley
of arrows in the direction
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

29 Pārtha-Arjuna replied
with a shower of sharp arrows,
and Bhīṣma continued his unceasing
mahā-arrow-barrage.

30 Both the combatants were mahātmās, O rājā;
both shot sharp arrows at each other.
It was difficult
choosing between them.

31 Diadem-decorated Kirīṭamālī-Arjuna
and Śāntanava-Bhīṣma
were expert chariot-heroes.
Their arrows fogged the ten directions.

32 A harrowing spectacle, O rājā Janamejaya!
Sometimes it seemed Pāṇḍava-Arjuna was winning,
and at other times victory swung
to Bhīṣma.

33 The protectors of Bhīṣma's chariot
lay strewn, O rājā,
on both sides of the chariot, fatally wounded
by Kaunteya-Arjuna's arrows.

34 White-horsed Śvetavāhana-Arjuna
fixed a feathered arrow to his bow
and, intent on ending the battle,
advanced steadily.

35 Gold-feathered white-painted arrows
glided through the air
like a flock of *haṁsa*-swans
crossing the sky.

36 Arjuna kept shooting his quiver
of flesh-mangling arrows
while Vāsava-Indra and the gods witnessed
the fearsome spectacle.

37 Illustrious Citrasena, chief of the gandharvas,
saw the battle and,
praising Arjuna,
said happily to Devarāja-Indra:

38 "The arrows of Arjuna fly
as if in one single mass.
What a magnificent exponent Jiṣṇu-Arjuna is
of divine missiles!

39 Other mortals cannot even conceive of these weapons
because they do not possess them:
these ancient mahā-weapons
are now on display today.

40 No one can tell when Arjuna
lifts his Gāṇḍīva bow,
when he strings it,
and when he aims and fires the arrow.

41 One cannot gaze into the flaming sun
at high noon –
one cannot gaze at the effulgent son
of Pāṇḍu.

42 Nor is there anyone who can gaze
At the radiant figure of Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma.

43 Both are famous for their unparalleled valour,
both have shown impossible feats,
both seem to be
almost equally matched."

44 O Bharata-descendant! Citrasena's words prompted
Devarāja-Indra to send a shower
of divine flowers on the heads of Pārtha-Arjuna
and Bhīṣma in appreciation.

45 Son-of-Śāntanu Bhīṣma suddenly attacked wound-
inflicting ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
and succeeded in pinning him down
on his chariot's left.

46 Bībhatsu-Arjuna smiled
and fitted a vulture-winged arrow
with which he cut down
Bhīṣma's sun-bright bow.

47 With ten more arrows
Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
was able to wound the valiant hero Bhīṣma
in his chest.

48 Harassed and cornered,
the mahā-muscled son of Gaṅgā
slumped beside the pole
of his magnificent chariot.

49 His charioteer, seeing him semi-conscious,
following battle instructions,
hurriedly drove the mahā-chariot away
from the battlefield.

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
With Bhīṣma's departure
mahātmā-Duryodhana
unfurled his banner,
brandished his bow
and, with a war-cry,
rushed at Arjuna.

2 From his ear-taut bow,
he let loose a *bhalla*
at Arjuna's forehead;
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna swerved
in fierce skirmish
on the field of battle.

3 Hit on his head, O rājā,
by the sharp gold arrow,
Arjuna stood still –
he shone like a hill,
a single-peaked hill,
alone but radiant.

4 The wound burst open,
a warm stream of blood
spilled from his forehead.
A magnificent sight!
Arjuna with gold arrow
stuck in his forehead!

5 Infuriated by rājā
Duryodhana's attack,
dexterous and powerful
Arjuna retaliated
with arrows that stung
like poisonous snakes.

6 Arjuna attacking
the hero Duryodhana,
Duryodhana attacking
Arjuna – both warriors
of the Ajamīḍha dynasty
continued their duel.

7 Assisted by four
magnificent chariots,
Vikarṇa attacked
on a hill-huge elephant,
charging at Arjuna,
the son of Kuntī.

8 Arjuna saw him come
and fired an arrow
that struck his elephant
in mid-temple,
the arrow released
at ear-taut velocity.

9 The vulture-winged shaft
pierced the hide
of the elephant
up to its feathers;
it sped like the thunderbolt
of Indra himself.

10 The elephant shuddered
in shaft-struck agony.
It reeled and fell
like a mountain struck
straight on its summit
by a fierce thunderbolt.

11 Vikarṇa descended
in fear from his chariot
and ran swiftly
eight hundred paces
to the safety
of Viviṁśati's chariot.

12 Killing the hill-huge
beast with his arrow
powerful as thunder,
Arjuna pressed on
with a similar arrow,
wounding Duryodhana.

13 Wounding the elephant
and rājā-Duryodhana,
repulsing Vikarṇa,
Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva
made the soldiers flee
in absolute panic.

14 Seeing his soldiers
fleeing, the elephant dead,
heroic Duryodhana
wheeled his chariot
and sought out a place
with no Arjuna near.

15 As blood-smeared Duryodhana,
shaft-wounded, wavered,
diadem-decorated
Arjuna, still eager
for battle, stood by
and challenged Duryodhana.

16 "Where is your fame,
reports of your valour,
fast-running hero?
Why are you now
not blowing your trumpet
as you did earlier?

17 I serve Yudhiṣṭhira,
I am the third son of Kuntī,
ready for battle.
Turn back!
Show me your face,
O Indra-among-men!

18 Duryodhana the Brave-in-Battle!
Meaningless!
You run from battle!
You flee from the field!
Where is your firmness?
Where is your valour?

19 None to defend you
in front or at back!
You are free, Duryodhana!
Run for dear life, brave hero!
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
grants you permission."

SECTION SIXTY-SIX

1 Mahātmā Arjuna's
humiliating words
pricked like a goad
and Duryodhana returned
like a mahā-musth elephant
badly mauled.

2 Arjuna kept taunting
the chariot hero,
comparing Duryodhana
to a trampled snake
half-crushed to death,
slithering back.

3 But Karṇa took heart
and, wearing his garland
of gold, he rallied
his strength to the north
of Duryodhana, and
prepared to attack.

4 Golden-robed Bhīṣma
also returned,
Foe-crushing Bhīṣma
stood in the west,
stringing his bow,
defending Duryodhana.

5 Droṇa and Kṛpa,
Duḥśāsana, Viviṁśati
rallied their forces
to take battle-stations
in the east, and started
stringing their bows.

6 Like the brilliant sun
lighting up remnants
of dissipated clouds,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
scattered his glory
on the remaining Kauravas.

7 The single-minded warriors
ringed Pārtha-Arjuna
with divine missiles,
and hurled a barrage
of arrows like rain
on a massive mountain.

8 Arjuna the Gāṇḍīva-
wielder, son of Indra,
impossible to vanquish,
fired the *sammohana*
or the Paralyser
on the bull-brave Kauravas

9 Shooting on all sides
his lovely-feathered arrows,
mahā-powerful Arjuna
routed the Kauravas
with the twang of his fearful
Gāṇḍīva-bow.

10 He lifted his mahā-conch
using both hands
and blew on it victory:
the peals reverberated
on earth, in the sky,
in all the directions.

11 Such was the deafening
power of the peals
that the Kauravas abandoned
their bows and stood
like petrified sed figures
in a deep peace.

12 Seeing the Kauravas silent,
Pārtha-Arjuna recalled
the words of Uttara;
to Virāṭa's son Uttara,
Arjuna exclaimed:
"Entranced are the Kauravas.

13 Escape from the field!
Remove Śaradvat's son Kṛpa's
and ācārya Droṇa's
white robes, Karṇa's yellow,
the blue of rājā Duryodhana
and Drauṇī-Aśvaṭhaman's.

14 Bhīṣma is conscious –
he can neutralise
the effects of my missile.
Pass him on his left –
still-conscious warriors
should be passed on the left."

15 The son of Virāṭa
released the reins,
and the horses sped forward;
first he collected
the robes of the Kauravas
inside his chariot.

16 He urged the white horses
the fastest they could.
Caparisoned in gold,
the horses carrying Arjuna
galloped through the field
littered with corpses.

17 Brave Bhīṣma with incredible
swiftness succeeded
in wounding Arjuna
as he flashed by,
Pārtha-Arjuna replied
with ten sharp arrows.

18 Arjuna kept shooting
until be succeeded
in going out of range:
he glowed with the radiance
of the thousand-rayed sun
on darkly-massed clouds.

19 Recovering consciousness,
the Kaurava heroes
saw the Indra-like hero
beyond arrow-shot.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
said to Bhīṣma:

20 "How did he escape?
Find out a means
of entrapping him now."
Śāntanava-Bhīṣma laughed:
"What was the matter?
What happened to your prowess?

21 Discarding your bow, and arrows,
you stood there peacefully;
Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-
Arjuna will not use
dishonourable means.
He stoops to no meanness;

22 Not for the three worlds
will he stain his sva-dharma.
Be happy he decided
to spare all our lives.
O hero of the Kauravas!
Return to your capital,
as Arjuna to his.
And see that in future
you look to your welfare."

23 These words of Bhīṣma
(said Vaiśampāyana)
removed the belligerence
of rājā Duryodhana,
He stood there silent,
sighing profoundly.

24 The other Kauravas also
accepted the advice.
Fighting only fanned
the flames of the fire
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
so they decided to retreat.

25 Watching the Kaurava
heroes depart,
Pārtha-Arjuna was pleased.
Standing still for a while,
without saying a word,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna approached

26 Pitāmaha Bhīṣma
and his guru Droṇa
and offered *praṇāma*;
next he wondrously
honoured Kṛpa, Aśvatthāman,
and others respectworthy.

27 With a single arrow
he shot off the crown
from Duryodhana's head.
He took leave of the Kauravas,
and twanged his Gāṇḍīva
as he departed.

28 He blew on his conch
called the Devadatta,
dispiriting his foes.
In his gold-bright chariot,
everywhere gold-garlanded,
he shone in full glory.

29 The rout of the Kauravas
pleased Kirīṭin-Arjuna.
He ordered Uttara:
"The cows are recovered,
the Kauravas defeated.
Drive to the capital."

30 Witnessing the battle between
the Kauravas and Phālguna-Arjuna,
the gods were elated;
praising the prowess
of Pārtha-Arjuna
they returned to abode.

SECTION SIXTY-SEVEN

1 After vanquishing the Kaurava army
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
bull-eyed Arjuna recovered the vast cattle-wealth
of Virāṭa.

2 As the defeated sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
were retreating,
a large contingent of Kaurava soldiers
emerged from the forest

3 In small groups and, fear-stricken,
stood before Arjuna,
their hair dishevelled, their palms joined
in respectful *añjali*.

4 Lost in a strange land,
collapsing from hunger and thirst,
fearful, confused, they *praṇāmaed* Pārtha-Arjuna:
"We are your slaves.

5 We beg you to spare our *prāṇa*,
our life-breath.
We will gladly serve you.
We want only your protection."

6 "I have never," said Arjuna,
"harmed the helpless,
the needy and distressed,
the old and defeated,
the ones who surrender
and offer me *añjali*.

7 May all go well with you!
You are welcome here.
Have no fear, and return.
I do not harm the helpless."

8 These words assured the soldiers,
and they blessed Arjuna,
wishing him long life, after recounting
his glorious deeds.

9 The Kauravas lacked courage
to stop victorious
Arjuna from entering
the capital city
like a musth elephant
proudly triumphant.

10 Scattering the Kauravas
like a powerful wind
swirls away clouds,
foe-crushing Arjuna
said affectionately
to the prince of Matsya:

11 "Only you, dear one, *tāta*,
know the Pāṇḍavas are staying
in your father's palace.
Refrain from praising
the Pāṇḍavas there –
or fear may kill him.

12 When you enter the city,
take credit for the victory
and say to your father:
'I vanquished the Kauravas,
and recovered the cattle
from the hands of your enemies."

13 "Ambidexterous Arjuna,
I do not have your śakti:
I am not you.
But I will keep secret
your identity, revealing
it only when advised."

14 Routing the enemy
and recovering the cattle,
Arjuna returned
to the ground of cremation –
he stood before the *śamī*-tree,
his body pierced with arrows.

15 The mahā-ape in his flag
shot like fire to the sky;
the other creatures too.
The māyā dissolved.
On Arjuna's chariot
the lion-flag re-appeared.

16 Re-storing the arrows, bow
and quivers of the Pāṇḍavas,
with mahātmā Kirīṭin-
Arjuna as his charioteer,
Uttara happily
drove back to the capital.

17 Frustrating his foes
in a marvellous feat,
Pārtha-Arjuna reverted
to Bṛhaannalā-guise;
braiding his hair,
mahā-minded Arjuna
accepted the reins
from the hands of Uttara
and drove to the capital.

18 The Kauravas, defeated and depressed,
prepared to return
to Hastināpura
in a state of complete disarray.

19 On his way back to the city,
Phālguna-Arjuna said to Uttara:

20 "Prince, mahā-muscled hero,
the cows have been escorted
ahead of us by the cow-keepers.
It is my suggestion

21 That we feed and bathe the horses
and go to Virāṭa city
in the afternoon; the horses are tired
and need rest.

22 The cow-keepers who reach the city
ahead of you
will announce the good news
of your victorious return."

23 Instructed by Arjuna,
Uttara sent runners
with news of the victory
announcing, "The enemies
are defeated,
and the cattle recovered."

24 The Bharata hero
and the Matsya hero
consulted and went
to be *śamī*-tree,
and, retrieving their ornaments,
loaded their chariot.

25 Routing the countless
ranks of the Kauravas,
recovering the cattle,
Uttara, with Bṛhannalā
driving his chariot,
happily came home.

SECTION SIXTY-EIGHT

1 King Virāṭa also recovered his wealth
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and, accompanied by the four Pāṇḍavas,
happily returned to his capital.

2 Mahārāja! He shone with glory in the midst
of the Pāṇḍavas :
he had routed the Trigartas
and recovered his cattle.

3 His army's heroes, and the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
honoured Virāṭa,
enchancer of the joy of his friends,
sitting on the throne.

4 His subjects, Brahmins and soldiers,
all came and welcomed him home,
paying due homage
to the Matsya rājā.

5 The king acknowledged their respect.
Then rājā Virāṭa,
dismissing the subjects and Brahmins,
enquired

6 About Uttara : "Where is Uttara?"
The girls of the inner apartments
replied to the king;
saying:

7 "The Kauravas robbed the cattle of the kingdom;
your son,
the conqueror of the earth,
spurred by his own courage,
with Bṛhannalā driving,
went out to defeat the Kauravas –

8 The mighty chariot-warriors,
Bhīṣma son of Santanu,
Kṛpa, Karṇa, Duryodhana,
Drona and the son of Drona."

9 When he heard that his son
had bravely set out
with only one chariot
driven by Bṛhannalā,
the rājā, depressed,
said to his ministers:

10 "When they learn that the Trigartas
have been routed,
the Kauravas and other chiefs
will not be patient.

11 Send a strong force
of my still unwounded soldiers,
whom the Trigartas could not harm,
to rescue Uttara."

12 To rescue his son,
the ruler of Matsya
sent horses and elephants,
chariots and soldiers,
variously bedecked
with dresses and gems.

13 Rājā Virāṭa of the Matsyas,
general of his forces,
despatched quickly a force
consisting of four fold divisions.

14 His orders were: "Find out immediately
if Uttara is alive or not.
With that eunuch charioteer helping,
he cannot possibly be alive."

15 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
smiling, told Virāṭa
heavy with anxiety:
"With Bṛhannalā pursuing,
his enemies cannot
run off with the cattle.

16 Protected by Bṛhannalā,
your son can defeat
not just the Kauravas
but the gods as well,
and the anti-gods too,
and Siddhas and Yakṣas."

17 Meanwhile, the swift runners despatched
by Uttara
arrived panting in the city,
and proclaimed the great victory.

18 The minister described the evens to the rājā
in detail –
the total rout of the Kauravas,
Uttara's triumph.

19 "The cattle have been recovered,
the Kauravas all defeated,
and foe-crushing Uttara and his charioteer
are in excellent health."

20 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "It is our good luck
that the cattle are recovered,
the Kauravas routed.
However, I think it is not strange.

21 Whoever hsa Bṛhannalā as charioteer
is sure to win.
Even Devendra-Indra's charioteer
Mātali

22 And the charioteer of Krishna, Dāruka,
cannot compare with Bṛhannalā."
The great king Virāṭa horripilated
with delight

23 At the news of the victory
of his puissant son.
He gave presents to the runners,
and said to his ministers:

24 "Deck the royal roads with flags!
Let the gods be adored with flowers!

25 Let the princes, chief warriors, bedecked courtesans
And musicians go out to welcome my son!

26 Send out a man with a bell,
riding a musth elephant,
to proclaim the victory at the crossing
of the four roads.

27 See that the princess Uttarā,
surrounded by royal ladies,
and gorgeously dressed,
is ready to welcome my son."

[IV:68:28-35]

28 The words of the king
put all in a flurry;
the citizens emerged
with auspicious trinkets,
cymbals and trumpets
and conches; and ladies

29 And professional chanters
and singers of praises,
and *paṇava*-drummers
set out to welcome
the mahā powerful son
of Virāṭa.

30 After ordering his soldiers, palace ladies
and richly-dressed courtesans,
the mahā-wise rājā of Matsya
delightedly said:

31 "*Sairandhrī*, get me the dice!
Kaṅka, let us play!"
Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Pāṇḍu,
said to king Virāṭa.

32 "It is said that one should not gamble
in excess of joy.
You are flushed with happiness;
so, I will not play.
I wish your welfare.
But if you insist, let us play!"

33 Virāṭa said: "Girls, cattle, gold,
and other wealth –
nothing excites me more
than a round of gambling."

34 Kaṅka replied: "Royal favour-bestower,
why this passion for the evils of gambling?
Gambling is treacherous.
Avoid it, O Indra-among-rājās!

35 You must have heard of, if not seen,
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
who lost his god-like brothers
and his vast and wealthy

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36 Kingdom in a game of dice,
I am suspicious of gambling.
There is no doubt that Yudhiṣṭhira
bitterly repents

37 All the jewels and other wealth
that he gambled away.
Kingdoms get squandered, and fierce dissensions
rise between gamblers.

38 A whole life can be ruined in a single day
by gambling,
say the learned.
But if your insist, O rājā, I will play."

39 The game began.
The Matsya king said to Yudhiṣṭhira:
"Have you seen the way my son routed
the fearful Kauravas?"

40 The mahātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"And why not, sire –
he had Bṛhannalā as his charioteer
to help him."

41 Incensed, the Matsya rājā
said to the son of Pāṇḍu:
"You Brahmin scoundrel,
comparing my son to a eunuch!

42 Don't you know what is seemly,
and what unseemly? You insult me!
Why couldn't my son defeat the heroes
led by Bhīṣma and Droṇa?

43 Because I like you,
I forgive you this incivility.
If you value your life,
never speak like this to me again!"

44 "Were Droṇa, Bhīṣma, and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Vikartana's son Karṇa,
Kṛpa, rājā Duryodhana, mahā-chariot-heroes,
and Indra," said Yudhiṣṭhira,

45 With all the Maruts, to combine forces,
who but Bṛhannalā
would have the courage to go
and confront them?

46 He has had no equal,
he will have no equal ever
in physical strength,
He delights in a mighty battle.

47 Why shouldn't your son win the battle
when helping him
was a man who once routed gods,
anti-gods, and humans?"

48 Virāṭa said, "I warned you,
but you are stubborn.
If there is no one to punish,
how will dharma survive?"

49 Virāṭa said this in a burst of anger.
He picked up the dice
and flung them furiously
at Yudhiṣṭhira's face.

50 They struck with such force that blood
trickled down Yudhiṣṭhira's nose.
Yudhiṣṭhira cupped the drops in his palms
as they fell.

51 Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira glanced at Draupadī
who was standing beside him.
Loyal to her husband,
guessing his meaning,

52 The faultless lady brought a golden pitcher
filled with water,
and held it under Yudhiṣṭhira's nose
to receive the blood.

53 Meanwhile, Uttara, profusely garlanded
and perfumed,
majestically entered the capital,
elated with achievement.

54 The ladies, villagers and citizens
welcomed him at the gate,
and he immediately sent word
to his father.

55 The guardian of the gate went
to king Virāṭa
and said "Bṛhannalā and your son
are waiting at the gate."

56 King Virāṭa joyfully said
to the guardian of the gate:
"Bring them to me!
I am eager to see them."

57 The Kaurava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira whispered
to the guardian as he was leaving:
"See that Uttara comes by himself,
not with Bṛhannalā.

58 O mahā-muscled one! Bṛhannalā has vowed
that he will kill anyone
who wounds me or makes me bleed
except on the battlefield –
and he is a man
who keeps his word.

59 If he sees me bleeding,
he will lose control of himself –
and kill Virāṭa, his advisers, horses,
and soldiers."

60 The eldest son of the rājā, Uttara,
entered the palace,
touched the feet of his father,
and glanced towards Kaṅka.

61 He saw him splattered with blood
sitting on the floor
in one corner of the court,
with the *sairandhrī* beside him.

62 Bewildered, he asked his father Virāṭa:
"O rājā, why is he bleeding?
Who hit him?
Who committed this foul deed?"

63 "I hit this rascally Brahmin," replied Virāṭa
"He deserves worse.
When I praised you,
he compared you to the eunuch."

64 "You did a great wrong, rājā," said Uttarā.
"Pacify him.
Do not let the poison of a Brahmin's curse
consume your life's roots."

65 The words of his son made Virāṭa,
increaser of his kingdom's prosperity,
ask pardon
from fire-within-ashes' Kaṅka.

66 As soon as the rājā asked pardon,
Yudhiṣṭhira stopped him, saying: "Rājā!
I bear no anger;
I forgave you long before you asked.

67 If any drops of blood had fallen
on your floor, mahārāja,
your kingdom would have been destroyed.
No doubt of that.

68 It is wrong to punish anyone who is blameless,
O rājā,
and I have absolved you of blame,
Kings are often rash."

69 Bṛhannalā entered the palace
after the bleeding had stopped.
He honoured king Virāṭa and Kaṅka,
and waited, silently.

70 Virāṭa had pacified Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira;
now the Matrya king
started praising Uttara profusely
in Savyasācī-Arjuna's presence.

71 "Son of Kaikeyī, you are truly a son
I am proud of.
I have no son like you,
nor am I likely to have.

72 *Tāta,* my child! How did you combat with Karṇa,
the magnificent hero
who fires hundreds of arrows simultaneously
and is invincible?

73 *Tāta,* my child! How did you fight with Bhīṣma
the hero whose equal
cannot be found in the entire world
of human beings?

74 How did you defeat Droṇa,
ācārya of the heroic Vṛṣṇis and Kauravas,
ācārya of all
the world's Kṣatriyas,
finest of the twice-born,
absolute master of all weapons?

75 How did you duel with Aśvatthāman,
son of the ācārya,
who is also celebrated
as the master of all weapons?

76 *Tāta*, my child! A merchant losing wealth loses hope;
so warriors, seeing Kṛpa, are terrified,
How were you able
to fight Kṛpa?

77 *Tāta*, my child! How did you hand-duel
with prince Duryodhana,
whose mahā-arrows have the power to pierce
massive mountains?

78 I am overjoyed that you routed the Kauravas
and recovered the cattle.
Because you defeated your foes,
the wind today blows sweetly.

79 *Tāta,* my child! You have decimated our enemies,
you have penetrated their ranks like a tiger
and you have rescued
all our cattle-wealth.
O bull-brave hero! You have spread terror
in the ranks of our enemies."

SECTION SIXTY-NINE

1 "But," said Uttara, "I did not rescue the cattle,
I did not defeat the enemy.
This was done
by the son of a god.

2 I fled in fear. A god's son,
who held a thunderbolt,
stopped me.
Then he climbed into my chariot.

3 He defeated the Kauravas,
and he recovered the cattle.
He is the hero of those feats –
not me, *tātā,* dear father.

4 His arrows wrought havoc in the ranks
of the six warriors –
Śāradvata-Kṛpa, Droṇa, Aśvatthāman,
Bhīṣma, the charioteer's son Karṇa,

5 Duryodhana and Vikarṇa.
When they fled like musth-elephants,
the mahā-powerful son of a god
said to Duryodhana:

6 'Son of a Kaurava, it seems to me
you will not be safe
even in Hastināpura.
So stand here – and fight!

7 How will running away make you free?
Steel your mind, O rājā, and fight!
Conquer, and get the earth.
Die – and get heaven.'

8 These words made tiger-among-men Duryodhana
sigh like a snake;
the rājā turned with his allies
and fired thunder-hard arrows.

9 O respectworthy lord! I horripilated.
My thighs trembled
The god's son harassed Duryodhana
and his army with arrows.

10 The lion-like youth kept attacking
the Kaurava-warriors, O rājā,
slicing off their armour,
and smiling as he did so.

11 The six mahā-famed chariot-heroes
were defeated by that one hero,
as one furious lion
terrorises a jungle."

12 "But" said Virāṭa, "this god's son,
this mahā-muscled, mahā-illustrious hero
who recovered my cattle from the Kauravas,
where is he?

13 I want to see that remarkable son of a god
who saved my son
and also recovered
my kingdom's cattle."

14 "His disappeared suddenly," replied Uttara,
"but I am certain the mahā-muscled hero
will appear in the palace tomorrow
or the day after."

15 In spite of all these details
(said Vaiśampāyana),
Virāṭa could not guess the identity
of the eunuch-Pāṇḍava.

16 After obtaining permission from mahātmā Virāṭa,
the disguised Pārtha-Arjuna
presented the exquisite robes he had collected
to Uttarā, Virāṭa's daughter.

17 The lovely girl Uttara was delighted
with those varied
and expensive dresses,
which Bṛhannalā presented to her.

18 Arjuna consulted with mahātmā Uttara
if the secret
should be revealed to Yudhiṣṭhira
and what next to do.

19 Both arrived at an understanding.
The bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
and the Matsya king's son were pleased
with their plan.

SECTION SEVENTY

1 On the third day,
after bathing and wearing white robes,
the five ornamented Pāṇḍava brothers
kept their vows,

2 And, with Yudhiṣṭhira leading them,
the mahā-chariot heroes came to the gate
of Virāṭa's capital –
looking like musth elephants.

3 They entered the sabhā of Virāṭa
and occupied the thrones
meant for kings;
they shone like five altar-fires.

4 They had hardly sat down
when lord-of-the-earth Virāṭa
entered to conduct
his many royal duties.

5 He saw the handsome Pāṇḍavas shining
like bright flames;
he reflected briefly; then a great anger
briefly possessed him.

6 The king of Matsya said to Kaṅka
who sat on a throne
as if he were the king of the gods,
served by the Maruts:

7 "You were a gambler, and I appointed you
a courtier in the sabhā.
Who are you to dress royally
and sit on a throne?"

8 Arjuna heard the words of Virāṭa.
He seemed to be smiling to himself
as he replied
to the Matsya king:

9 "O rājā! This man deserves to share Indra's throne.
He respects Brahmins,
he is vow-observing, yajña-performing,
śruti-wise, unselfish;

10 He is Dharma personified,
the strongest of the strong.
He is gifted with a superior mind,
he excels in tapasyā.

11 He knows how to wield all weapons.
No creature, moving or unmoving,
in the three worlds,
equals or can equal him –

12 Not the gods, nor the anti-gods,
nor human beings;
not rākṣasas, gandharvas, yakṣas, Kinnaras,
or even mahā-*uraga* serpents.

13 He sees far, he is mahā-energetic,
he is loved by city-dwellers and villagers,
he is strong in yajña and dharma,
an excellent Pāṇḍava chariot-hero.

14 He is a mahā-ṛṣi, and a rāja-ṛṣi;
his fame is known
and celebrated in all the worlds,
He is powerful, intelligent,
truth-speaking, self-disciplined. His wealth equals
Śakra-Indra's and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's.

15 He protects the worlds
like a mahā-energetic Manu;
he is the mahā-energetic lord of people,
the shining illustrious ruler –

16 He is dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira in person!
He is the bull-brave lord of the Kurus.
His fame spreads
like soft dawn in the world.

17 His glory is also like the rays
of the setting sun,
which slowly colour the entire expanse
of the sky.

18 When he travels in the land of the Kurus,
O rājā,
ten thousand mighty elephants
make up his procession

19 Not only that, he has thirty thousand
splendidly-decorated chariots,
ornamented with golden garlands,
always at his disposal.

20 Like the mahā-ṛṣis singing Śakra-Indra's praises,
eight hundred *magadha*-chanters
wearing pearl-inlaid bracelets
extol his inexhaustible merits.

21 O rājā! Like innumerable gods paying court
to god-of-wealth Dhaneśvara-Kubera,
rājās and Kauravas gather like Kiṁkaras
to honour him.

22 The mahā-fortune-favoured ruler of people
has placed
all the merchants of the land
completely in his debt.

23 Eighty-eight thousand mahātmā *snātaka*
Brahmins
depend on this vow-observing rājā
for their daily subsistence.

24 The lame, distressed, crippled and blind
are treated by him affectionately.
His subjects are like his sons,
governed by dharma.

25 This ruler follows dharma,
controls his senses, subdues anger.
He is mahā-generous, devoted to Brahmins,
and truth-speaking.

26 His glory is soon going to signify
the end of Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
Karṇa, Saubala-Śakuni
and all their followers.

27 It is not possible to enumerate all his virtues,
O lord of men.
He is a man of dharma,
he is a man who never harms others.

28 It is the mahārāja,
the brave bull of the Bharatas,
the greatest Pāṇḍava rājā
that you see ensconced on that throne."

SECTION SEVENTY-ONE

1 Virāṭa said: "If this is Yudhiṣṭhira
the Kaurava-rājā, son of Kuntī,
who here is powerful Bhīma
and who is Arjuna?

2 Who is Nakula, who Sahadeva,
and where is illustrious Draupadī?
Since their dice-defeat,
no one has spotted the Pāṇḍava."

3 "Lord of men, mahārāja," said Arjuna,
"the cook known as Ballava
is actually Bhīma,
the tremendously powerful hero.

4 He exterminated the furious rākṣasa
on the hill called Gandhamādana
and brought Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
the *saugandhika*-flowers.

5 He is the gandharva who throttled to death
ill-ātmaned Kīcaka;
he fought and killed tigers, bears, and boars
in the inner apartments.

6 It was Bhīma who killed Hiḍimba,
the anti-gods Baka, Kirmīra and Jaṭa,
and made the forest again thorn-free,
habitable and happy.

7 The keeper of your horses
is the great foe-slayer Nakula;
Sahadeva is your cattle-keeper,
Both are mahā-chariot-heroes

8 They wear attractive ornaments and robes.
These brave Bharatas
are capable of repulsing attacks
by a thousand mahā-chariot-heroes.

9 The sweet-smiling, lotus-eyed, slim-waisted *sairandhrī*
is Draupadī, O rājā,
on whose account the Kīcakas were killed
in your kingdom.

10 Maharāja, I am Arjuna. You probably know
I am Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
the younger brother of Bhīma,
and elder brother of the twins.

11 We have passed our final days of exile
happily
in your palace, undetected,
like creatures inside a womb."

12 After Arjuna had introduced
the five sons of Pāṇḍu,
prince Uttara eloquently extolled
the glory of Arjuna.

13 Uttara also identified and introduced
the Pāṇḍava brothers, one by one.

14 "This lion-like hero,
with golden complexion,
copper-bright eyes,
symmetrical body
and long nose,
is the Kuru-rājā.

15 This hero who strides
like a musth elephant,
with golden complexion,
enormous shoulders
and heavy arms,
is wolf-waisted Bhīma.

16 The youthful hero
of blue-dark complexion,
leonine-confident,
elephant-gaited,
lotus-eyed lord,
is heroic Arjuna.

17 Next to the rājā
are the twins who equal
Viṣṇu and Indra.
There is none in the world
to match their achievements,
their strength and good looks.

18 Beside them is Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
golden-skinned beauty.
Her shining skin,
her lotus-large eyes
reveal her as Lakṣmī,
goddess of prosperity."

19 After identifying the five Pāṇḍavas
to the king of Matsya,
Uttara launched into a panegyrio
on the virtues of Arjuna:

20 "Like a lion slaughtering deer,
he killed his foes.
He sped in his chariot,
wiping out his enemies.

21 A single arrow of his knocked down
a huge elephant.
That caprisoned-in-gold tusker collapsed
in a heap.

22 He recovered the cattle after humbling
the Kaurava army.
The peals of his conch are still ringing
in my ears."

23 After Uttara had spoken,
the rājā of the Matsyas,
who had insulted Yudhiṣṭhira,
turned and said to his son:

24 "It is now right that I should honour
the Pāṇḍavas.
If you agree, I would like to bestow Uttarā
on Pārtha-Arjuna."

25 Uttara replied: "Indeed, it is time
to venerate the Pāṇḍavas
who fully deserve our respect
and our pūjā."

26 Virāṭa said: "When I was trapped
by my enemies,
it was Bhīma who rescued me
and saved my cattle.

27 The feats of the Pāṇḍavas have won victory
for us.
We, and our ministers, will honour
Kuntī's son, mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,

28 Saying, 'If we have in any way
unknowingly offended you,
please forgive our mistake.
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira is a dharmātmā."

29 The noble Virāṭa
made alliance with rājā
Yudhiṣṭhira and offered
the mahātmā his sceptre,
his city, and all
the wealth of his treasury.

30 Addressing the Pāṇḍavas,
and specially Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the rājā of the Matsyas kept saying,
"How fortunate I am!"

31 He respect fully embraced and smelt the heads
of Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma, and Mādrī's twin sons
again and again.

32 Lord-of-armies Virāṭa seemed never to tire
seeing them.
With great delight
he said to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

33 "It is my good fortune that you are safe
after your exile in the forest,
undetected by your ill-ātmaned
pursuing enemies.

34 I make a gift of my kingdom
and all that I have
to the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī.
Be gracious and accept my gift.

35 On ambidexterous Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
I now bestow my daughter
Let that most excellent of men
be her worthy husband."

36 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira glanced in the direction
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
who took the hint and replied
to the king of Matsya:

37 "I accept your daughter, O rājā,
but as my daughter-in-law.
An alliance between the Matsyas and Bharatas
is proper."

SECTION SEVENTY-TWO

1 "Excellent Pāṇḍavas," enquired King Virāṭa,
"why are you unwilling
to accept as your wife my daughter
whom I gladly bestow?"

2 "I have lived in the inner apartments,"
said Arjuna,
"with your daughter. She confided in me
as if in her father.

3 I was skilled in song and dance
and she grew fond of me.
She always gave me the respect
due to an ācārya.

4 O rājā! I stayed with her for a year
during her growing into puberty.
You and your courtiers may misinterpret
our relations.

5 That is why, O lord of men, I would prefer
to have her as my daughter-in-law.
Pure and self-disciplined,
I prove her purity also.

6 The difference between a daughter
and a daughter-in-law
is the same as between oneself and one's son.
In this way,
no blame will attach, and our purity
will be established.

7 O foe-crusher! I do not want a curse on me,
nor false accusations.
That is why I accept your daughter
as my daughter-in-law, O rājā.

8 My son is Vāsudeva-Krishna's nephew;
he is a god-like youth
who has mastered weapons,
and is a favourite of the *cakra*-wielder.

9 O lord of the earth,
my son is strong-armed Abhimanyu,
a deserving son-in-law for you
and worthy husband for your daughter."

10 "It is right that the excellent Kuru," said Virāṭa,
"Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
who has dharma and wisdom,
should say this.

11 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
I leave it to you to do
what you think should be done.
Friendship with you means fulfilment of hopes."

12 When the Indra-like rājā finished,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
gave his assent to the alliance
between Matsya and Pāṇḍava.

13 So Kuntī's son and King Virāṭa,
fully satisfied with the arrangement
sent a joint invitation
to Vāsudeva-Krishna.

14 After the end of the thirteenth year,
the five Pāṇḍavas
continued to stay in a Matsya city
called Upaplavya.

15 Pāṇḍu's son Bībhatsu-Arjuna sent invitations
to Abhimanyu,
to Janārdana-Krishna and the Dāśārha clan,
from Ānarta-land.

16 The rājā of Kāśi and Saibya,
intimate friends of Yudhiṣṭhira,
came, each with a full *akṣauhiṇī*
of soldiers.

17 Mahā-powerful Yajñasena-Drupada arrived
with an *akṣauhiṇī* of soldiers;
also the brave son of Draupadī,
and invincible Śikhaṇḍin.

18 Tremendously powerful Dhṛṣṭadyumna came,
along with other kings,
each with an *akṣauhiṇī*
of excellent soldiers,
all yajña-dedicated, Veda-learned,
and loyal to the Pāṇḍavas.

19 Best of-dharma-followers king Virāṭa
offered them pūjā-respect
when they arrived, welcoming them
with servants and soldiers.

20 Virāṭa was delighted to bestow his daughter
on Abhimanyu.
The numerous celebrities took the places
assigned to them.

21 Garland-bedecked Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Halāyudha-Balarāma and Kṛtavarman,
Hṛdika and Yuyudhāna
(whose real name was Sātyaki),

22 Anāḍhṛṣṭi, Akrūra, Sāmba, Niśaṭha, –
These arrived with Abhimanyu and his mother.

23 Indrasena and others, who had spent
a whole year in Dvārakā,
also came
in their splendid chariots.

24 Ten thousand elephants, twenty thousand horses,
then thousand chariots,
and ten lakh of foot soldiers
accompanied

25 The greatest of the Vṛṣṇis,
refulgent Vāsudeva-Krishna;
also with him were heroes from the Vṛṣṇi,
Andhaka, and Bhoja clans.

26 Krishna presented the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
numerous female attendants,
jewels, dresses
and other expensive gifts.

27 The nuptial tie was celebrated
between the Matsyas and the Pāṇḍavas
Conches, cymbals, drums, trumpets
and other instruments

28 Sounded. Deer and other animals
were killed for the feast;
wine and various celestially exquisite drinks
were served.

29 Singers, and chanters and actors were called
to provide entertainment;
they came and sang the praises
of the illustrious Pāṇḍavas.

30 Wearing magnificent jewelled earrings,
the lovely ladies of the palace,
led by Sudeṣṇā,
approached beautiful Draupadī.

31 All of them were radiant with beauty,
they were enchanting dressed;
but Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's beauty and dress
shamed them all.

32 They adorned princess Uttarā as if
she were the daughter of Mahendra-Indra,
and escorted her
to the wedding ceremony.

33 Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna accepted,
for his son Abhimanyu by Subhadrā,
the totally-lovely Uttarā.
daughter of Virāṭa.

34 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī, looking like Indra,
accepted as his daughter-in-law the daughter of Virāṭa.

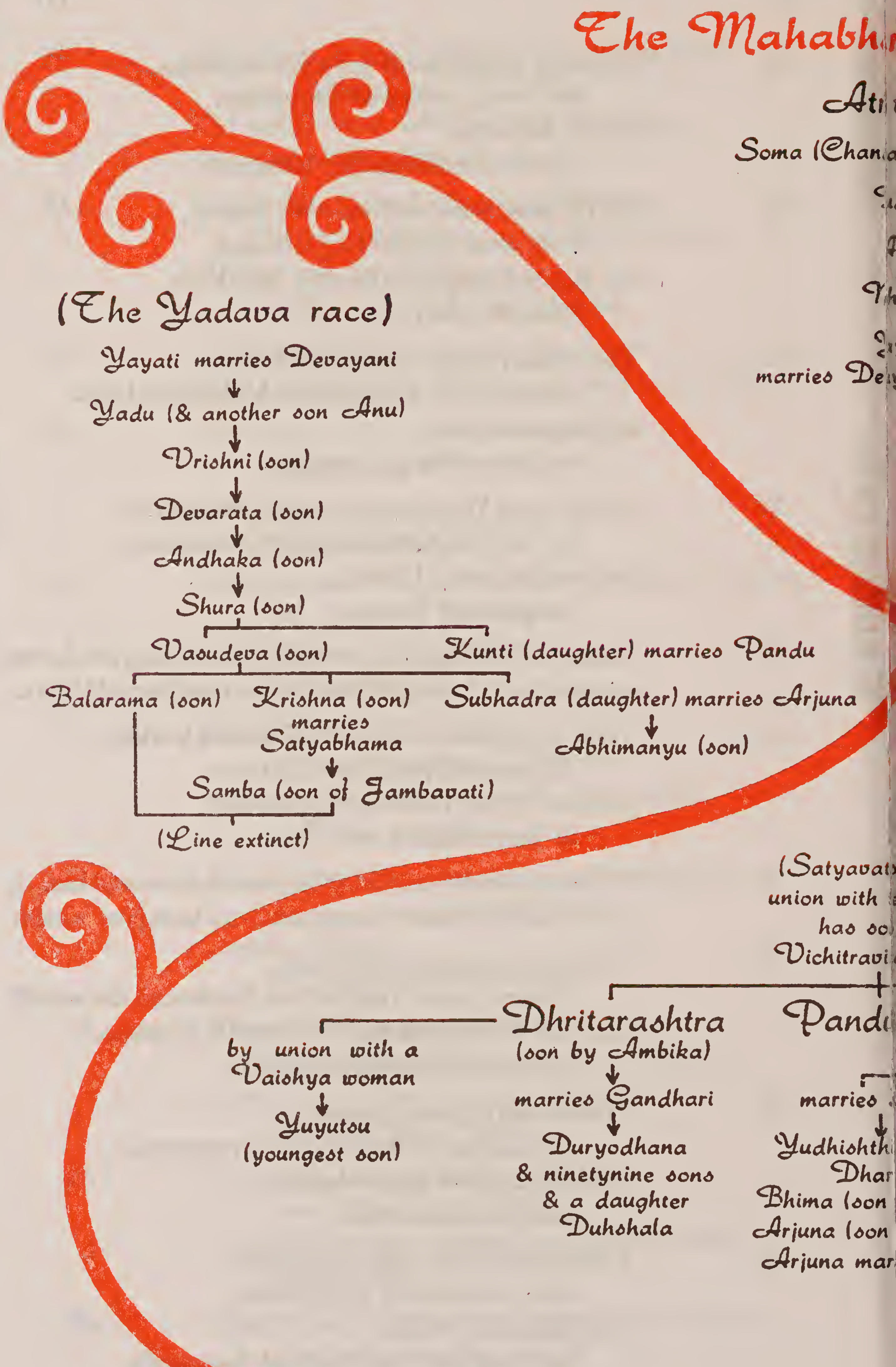
35 With Janārdana-Krishna and Uttarā leading,
the son of Pṛthā-Kuntī, Arjuna,
performed the marriage-ceremony
of his mahātmā son.

36 Virāṭa presented his son-in-law seven thousand horses,
two hundred massive elephants, and immense wealth.

37 After the marriage-ceremony,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira distributed the wealth,
that had been presented by Acyuta-Krishna,
to the assembly of Brahmins.

38 Thousands of cows, jewels,
all manner of dresses and ornaments,
vehicles and the most elegant
and luxurious beds,

39 Various kinds of food and drink
were distributed as presents.
The capital of Virāṭa,
bursting with hundreds of thousands
of visitors,
was all festivity.



Sketch by Srimati Lal

Family Tree

ʔishi

du) the Moon

)

n)

)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

↓

Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)

↓

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

↓

Bharata (son)

↓

Hastin (son)

↓

Kuru (son)

↓

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

e-marriage union with Ganga

↓

Bhishma (son)

sa

her pre-marriage

Parashara; Vyasa

two widows of

ika & Ambalika)

Chitrangada (son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son) marries Ambika & Ambalika (their eldest sister Amba, reborn male as Shikhandin, kills Bhishma in the war)

Ambalika)

Vidura (son by low caste woman)

and

Madri

↓

Nakula & Sahadeva (twin sons by Ashvins)

)

)

adra

nyu (son) marries Uttara

↓

Parikshit (son)

↓

Janamejaya (son)



This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

V O W E L S

Guttaral	अ	आ	
	a	ā	
Palatal	इ	ई	
	i	ī	
Labial	उ	ऊ	
	u	ū	
Dental	ऋ		
	ṛ		
Guttaral-Palatal		ए	ऐ
	e	ei	
Guttaral-Labial		ओ	औ
	o	au	

C O N S O N A N T S

Guttaral	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

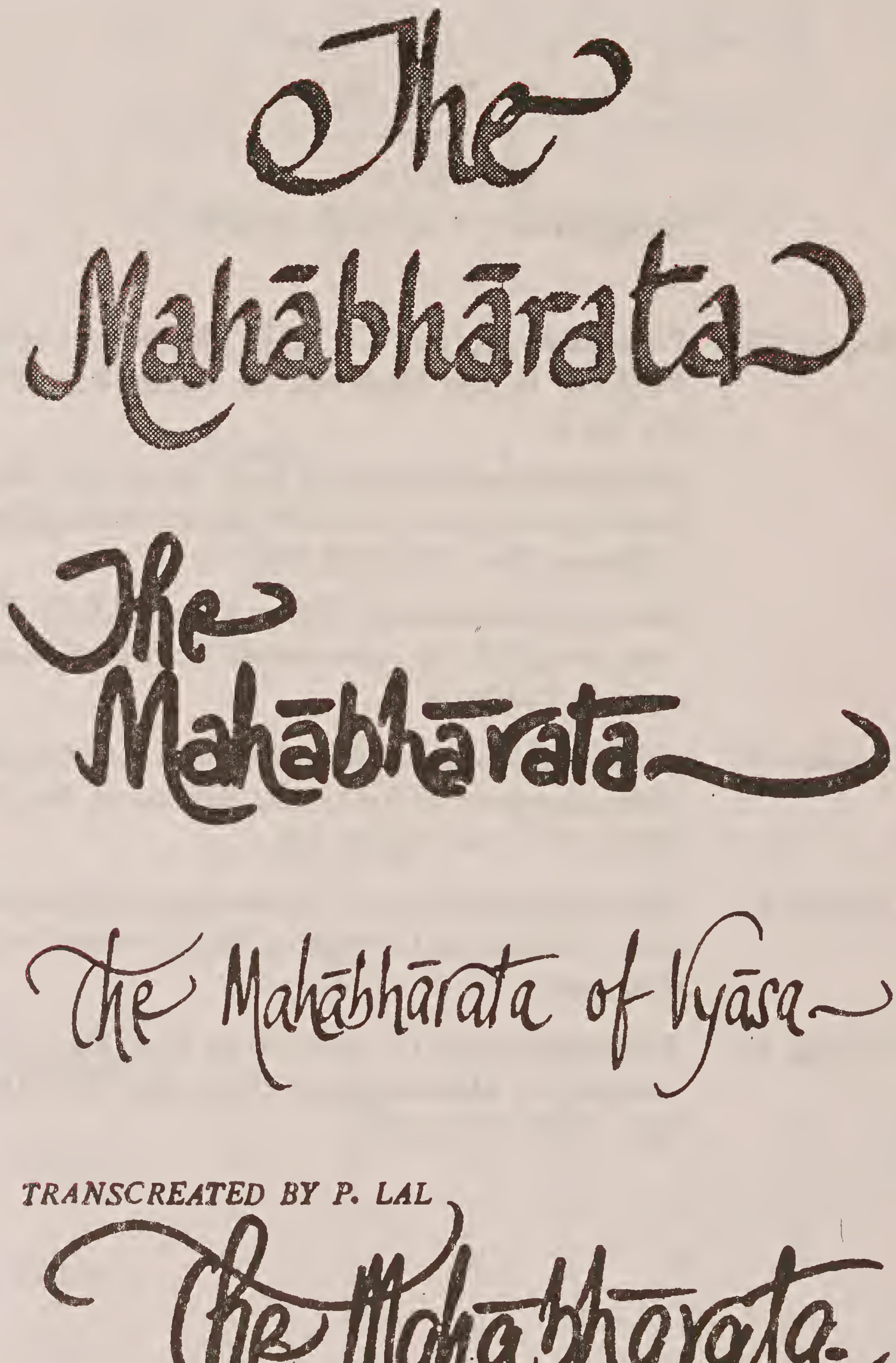
Anusvara = ṁ

C O N T E N T S

CANTO IV

Virāṭaparva : This Book of Strife

Courtesy:
Madhusraba Dasgupta
Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)



The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.

Vyāsa Mahābhārata Kathā Library

VYĀSA MAHĀBHĀRATĀ KATHĀ LIBRARY

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa is a cornucopious treasure house of stories. WRITERS WORKSHOP is bringing out a series of kathās from the mahā-epic, in the śloka-by-śloka English transcreation by P. Lāl. Each volume will carry a brief (around 800 words) synopsis of the tale and information about its protagonists. Most of the volumes will also have a preface by Pradip Bhattacharya (again brief, around 1,000 words) on the "deeper meaning" of each kathā, concerning its symbolism, myth and metaphoric interpretation. The Scaffolding and the Significance – in this two-pronged presentation WRITERS WORKSHOP plans to explore, through Vyāsa's imagination and itihāsa-retelling, the riches of the ancient Indian tradition of Sūta story-weaving. Story and history, tale and detail, vision and revision coalesce in this entertaining and illuminating journey through a civilisation that communicated lasting values and ideals by vivid oral means. All the volumes are scheduled for publication in 2006. Special Advance Subscription for all 12 volume: Rs 2400.

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HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kolkata Calendar



A painting by Sanatan Dinda at Aakriti Art Gallery

READING SESSION

G D Birla Sabhagar
Professor P Lal reads Sanjaya's report to Dhritarastra of the aftermath of the 13th day's battle at Kuruksetra, with Vyasa trying to console grieving Yudhisthira by discoursing on the origin, nature and meaning of death, and giving the example of the raja-rishi Ahampana, in the 326th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of the Vyasa's complete *Mahabharata* presented by Sanskriti Sagar on May 7 at 11 am.

Appearing in single-volume format from WRITERS WORKSHOP
The Complete Mahābhārata transcreated by P. Lāl

Book 1 : The Ādi Parva (2005)
Book 2 : The Sabhā Parva (2005)
Book 3 : The Vana Parva (2005)
Book 4 : The Virāṭa Parva (2006)
Book 5 : The Udyoga Parva (2006)
Book 6 : The Bhīṣma Parva (2006)
Book 7 : The Droṇa Parva (2006)
Book 8 : The Karṇa Parva (2006)
Book 9 : The Śalya Parva (2006)
Book 10 : The Sauptika Parva (2006)
Book 11 : The Śtrī Parva (2006)
Book 12 : The Śānti Parva (2007)
Book 13 : The Anuśāsana Parva (2008)
Book 14 : The Aśvamedha Parva (2008)
Book 15 : The Āśramavāsika Parva (2008)
Book 16 : The Mausala Parva (2006)
Book 17 : The Mahāprasthāna Parva (2006)
Book 18 : The Svargārohaṇa Parva (2006)

Appearing from WW in 2006

Prefaces & Notes to Vyāsa's Ādi Parva
Prefaces and Notes to Vyāsa's Sabhā Parva
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śakuntalā Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yayāti Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Mandapāla Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Draupadī-Svayaṁvara Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Sāvitrī-Satyavān Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Nala-Damayantī Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śiśupāla-Vadha Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

On the following pages are facsimile reproductions of pages from different Mahābhārata fascicules (#77-84) of the Virāṭa Parva, showing the Sanskrit notes and extensive revisions and additions by P. Lal. These were prepared for the reading sessions of the transcreation, presented under the auspices of the Sanskriti Sagar in the Library of Dharma and Culture at the G. D. Birla Sabhagar in Kolkata. Started in October 1999, P. Lal has so far (April 2006) read 325 one-hour sessions, followed by question-and-answer periods of up to half an hour. Session 307 ended the Bhīṣma Parva; session 308 began the Droṇa Parva.

8 FORMS OF RUDRA-ŚIVA:
1) ŚARVA (ARCHER), BHAVA (EXISTENCE)
3) PAŚUPATI (HERDSMAN) 4) ĪŚĀNA (RULER)
5) BHĪMA (FEARFUL) 6) RUDRA (LORD-OF-TEARS) 7) MAHĀDEVA (GREAT GOD)
8) UGRA or AŚANI (FEARFUL OR THUNDERBOLT)

12 ĀDITYAS: 6 MAJOR:
1) MITRA (friendship) 2) ARYAMAN (chivalry)
3) BHAGA (inherited share) 4) VARUNA (binder, coverer) 5) DAKṢA (skill)
AMŚA (gods' given share)
6 MINOR: 1) TVAṢṬṚ (shaper)
2) PŪṢAN (nourisher) 3) VIVASVAT (resplendent) 4) SAVITṚ (vivifier)
5) ŚAKRA (mighty) 6) VIṢṆU (Pervader)

8 VASUS: 1) DHAVA or DHĀRĀ (flow)
2) Aha, Āha or Āp (water) or Sāvitra (Sun) 3) PRABHĀSA (dawn or sky)
4) ANILA (wind, life giver) 5) ANALA or PĀVAKA (purifier) 6) PRATYŪṢA (light)
7) SOMA (moon) 8) DHRUVA (POLESTAR)

] The P. Lāl Transcreation

yakṣa-
Indra,

at proficiency

Rudra,

Graha ;

y strong, समौ दीर्घौ
repeated कठिन
ring.

laya is
: sea
the Vasus,

and Garuda
res,
lad warriors.

किं करिष्यति
What is his plan ?"

26 "Ruler of the earth," replied Arjuna, षण्ढकोऽस्मि
महीपते
"I will be a eunuch,
a neuter-sexed one. It is difficult
to hide bow-string scars,

(worse form of षण्ड)

name of Śiva, eunuch, hermaphrodite (20 classes of such people are enumerated)

27 But I will wear bangles and
conceal the cicatrices
on my arms. I will wear fire-bright
rings in my ears,

कुण्डले
ज्वलनप्रभे

28 ~~And~~ Conch-bangles on my wrists; I will be
the third sex, ~~I will do my hair~~

तृतीयां प्रकृतिं

बृहन्नल = बृहन्नर = great man

So my hair in braids, ~~and take on the name~~
and call myself of Bṛhannala, O rājā.

29 In my girl-guise I will excel
in repeatedly chanting
the tales of kings to ladies in
the inner apartments.

स्त्रीभावेन पुनः पुनः

30 I shall tutor the ladies of Virāṭa
in singing and ~~all~~
variety of dancing and musical instruments
of all kinds, O rājā.

गीतं नृत्यं विचित्रं

31 I will recite stories of ~~different~~ inspiring
human deeds and customs,
and I will have no difficulty in
concealing my identity.

32 If the ~~king asks~~ rājā questions me, I will say :
'I was employed
as Draupadī's waiting-maid in the
palace of Yudhiṣṭhira.'

परिचारिका

O Indra-among-rājās,
33 And so, using this means to hide
myself, as fire is hid

...ays
...a:" I will enjoy my days in Virāṭa's palace."
...of men
...iṣṭhira turned

सूर्यश्चन्द्रो मङ्गलश्च
बुधश्चापि बृहस्पतिः।
शुक्रः शनैश्चरो राहुः
केतुश्चेति नवग्रहः॥

SURYA (SUN), CHANDRA (Moon), ŚUKRA (Venus), BUDHA (Mercury), BRHASPATI (Jupiter), ŚANI (Saturn), KUJA (Mars), RĀHU and KETU.

(NINE GRAHAS)
constellations

N 3

...ccustomed Nakula,"
tāta, dear one,

L...... Balarama, the chief of Vasudev, was ... by Yogamāyā ... of Devakī to womb of Rohiṇī

वासुदेवस्य भगिनीं
दिव्यमाल्यविभूषिताम् ।
दिव्याम्बरधरां देवीं
खड्गखेटकधारिणीम् ॥

नमोऽस्तु वरदे कृष्णे
कुमारि ब्रह्मचारिणि ।
बालार्कसदृशाकारे
पूर्णचन्द्रनिभानने ॥

The P. Lāl Transcreation

...arlanded,
...ī,
...for the
...
...of
...!
...goddess devī,
...brothers

Pañca-Devīs are: Durgā, Rādhā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvati, Savitri

"invoked her with these chants sung in her praise : स्तोतुं

7 "Granter of boons ! Varade !
Equal of Krishna ! Krishna !
Virginal goddess ! Kumāri !
Brahmacāriṇī !
Bright-bodied like the dawn !
Lovely moon-faced goddess !
... namo-astu !

चतुर्भुजे चतुर्वक्त्रे
पीनश्रोणिपयोधरे ।
मयूरपिच्छवलये
केयूराङ्गदधारिणि ।
भासि देवि यथा पद्मा
नारायणपरिग्रहः ॥

...angles !
...s !
...nā, O devī !
...ky,
...adiant !

Dark-blue like Krishna ! कृष्णच्छविसमा कृष्णा
O Saṁkarṣaṇa-faced goddess ! संकर्षणसमानना

10 Two long arms upraised
Like poles to honour Indra ! Śakra-
In the other arms :
A vessel, a lotus, a bell, पात्री पङ्कजी घण्टी

11 A noose, a bow, a mahā-cakra ! पाशं धनुर्महाचक्रं
These are your various weapons.
Lady with lovely ears
Made radiant with excellent ear-rings !

12 Lovelier than the moon
Is your face, O ~~goddess~~ devī ! मुकुटेन विचित्रेण
Magnificent diadem,
Exquisite hair done in a braid! केशबन्धेन शोभना

13 Braided hair gliding
Down your body like a snake ! भुजङ्गाभोगवासेन
A girdle round your waist,
Like snake-girdled Mandara-mountain ; श्रोणिसूत्रेण

14 Peacock-plumes like a flag राजसा
Shining on your head !
Radiantly beautiful goddess !
Virginal goddess !
Purifier of the three worlds ! त्रिदिवं पावितम्

15 No wonder the gods sing your praises, O devī,
And offer you pūjā !
You slew the buffalo anti-god महिषासुरनाशिनि
And saved the three worlds !
Be gracious to me, goddess who excels the gods!
Show me your mercy ! प्रसन्ना मे सुरश्रेष्ठे

16 You are Jaya !
You are Vijaya ! दयां कुरु
You the granter of victory in battle !
शिवा भव

विन्ध्ये चैव नगश्रेष्ठे तव स्थानं हि शाश्वतम् ।
कालि कालि महाकालि खड्ग खट्वाङ्ग धारिणि ॥

40 [IV : 6 | 17 - 22] *The P. Lāl Transcreation*

Grant me victory, Devi!
Grant me a boon in my distress !

17 Kālī !
Kālī !
Mahākālī !
Dweller on the Vindhyas,
~~Eternal mountains!~~ Eternal mountains!
~~Enjoyer of sacrifices~~ Wielder of the sacrificial scimitar
~~Of wine and flesh and blood !~~
And the khaṭva-axe!

18 You grant boon~~s to your~~ devotees !
You go where you please ! Kāmacāriṇī!
~~You are followed by the gods !~~
You whom the sorrow-stricken always remember!

19 Nothing is impossible for those
Who supplicate before you, प्रणमन्ति प्रभाते
Who offer you pranāma at dawn !
पुत्रतो धनतो Wealth is theirs~~, progeny~~ is theirs !

20 Durgā !
Durgā the Faraway One
Because you remove the sorrows of devotees !
Durgā the one who rescues !

ये स्मरन्ति महादेवि
न च सीदन्ति ते नरा: ।
त्वं कीर्ति: श्री धृति:
सिद्धि ह्रीं विद्या
संततिर्मति: ॥

lost in the forest, महार्णवे
lrowned in the ocean !

ıbbed and the beaten !
त्वं गति: परमा
ıccour
forest and plain.

who remember you!

rosperity,

You are Modesty,
You are Knowledge,
You are Offspring,
You are Intellect !

23 You are Saṃdhyā, संध्या रात्रिः प्रभा निद्रा
You are Night,
You are Dawn, ज्योत्स्ना कान्तिः क्षमा दया।
You are Sleep,
You are Moonlight, नृणां च बन्धनं मोहं
You are Loveliness,
You are Forgiveness, पुत्रनाशं धनक्षयम् ॥
You are Mercy !
You break the bonds
Of loss of sons and loss of wealth,

24 Of disease and death and fear, व्याधिं मृत्युं
If you are offered pūjā. भयं चैव
Deprived of my kingdom, पूजिता
शरणं त्वां प्रपन्नवान् ← I have come for your blessings. नाशयिष्यसि

25 Devi !
Goddess above all gods !
Sureśvarī !
I bow my head at your feet. पद्मपत्राक्षि
-leaf- Lotus-eyed lady,
I love the Truth,
Show me the Truth ! सत्ये सत्या भवस्व नः

शरणं भव मे दुर्गे शरण्ये ← 26 Durgā ~~[illegible]~~ !
Refuge of all ! Grant me refuge!
Benevolent to ~~devotees~~ bhaktas! भक्तवत्सले
Merciful one,
Grant ~~Give~~ me your ~~darshan!~~ grace!"

~~27~~ Praised in this way,
-devi- ← Durgā gave darshan to the Pāṇḍava.

नोच्चगुल्फा संहतोरुः 3*
त्रिगम्भीरा षडुन्नता । 6
रक्ता पञ्चसु रक्तेषु 5
हंसगद्गदभाषिणी ॥
सुकेशी सुस्तनी श्यामा
पीनश्रोणिपयोधरा ।
तेन तेनैव सम्पन्ना
काश्मीरीव तुरङ्गमी ॥

The P. Lāl Transcreation

ed dressed रूपाम्
tle lady, अनाथाम्
you want?" एकवाससम्
:
vides
say,"
t to order
nts.

10 Your heels are not too high, your thighs
touch each other. (3)
Your intelligence and ~~words~~ speech are as
deep as your navel.
Your soles, palms, eyes, lips, tongue are healthy,
your voice *haṃsa*-sweet. (5)

रक्त pink of health!

11 You have lovely hair, full breasts,
you are most graceful.
Your haunches are rounded like
your lovely breasts.
You have all the characteristics of
a mare ~~a lady~~ of Kaśmīra.

* same phrase as used for Durgā, 6:8 (page 38)

12 Gracefully curved are the hairs
on your eyes, your waist is slim,
your lips are red like *bimba*-fruit,
your neck is shaped
like a conch, ~~with~~ your veins ~~subtly~~ are not visible,
your face is the full moon.

#

13 You are Śrī the goddess of beauty,
your eyes are the petals

(6) Your nose, ears, eyes, breasts, nails and throat
are well-shaped,

अरालपक्ष्म नयना #
बिम्बोष्ठी तनुमध्यमा ।
कम्बुग्रीवा गूढशिरा
पूर्णचन्द्र निभानना ॥
शारदोत्पलपत्राक्ष्या
शारदोत्पलगन्धया ।
शारदोत्पलसेविन्या
रूपेण सदृशी श्रिया ॥

- 20] 53

ıdy
~~to stand~~
ısonified. #
?
ıdharvī,

… are you
a city's patron goddess? a Vidyādharī, नगरस्य देवता
Kinnarī, a Rohiṇī?

16 Are you Alambuṣā, Miśrakeśī, Puṇḍarīkā,
or Mālinī? are you
the consort of Indra, Varuṇa, Viśvakarma,
or ~~even~~ of Prajāpati?
These devīs are famous in heaven — ~~which~~ lovely one, शुभे
which of these are you?"

17 "I am neither devī, gandharvī,
anti-goddess, nor rākṣasī.
What I tell you is true — I am सत्यमेतद् ब्रवीमि ते
a *sairandhrī* maid.

18 I can dress hair, ~~and make excellent~~
pastes and unguents, lovely lady. शुभे
With jasmines, lotuses, blue lilies
and champaks, → मल्लिकोत्पलपद्मानां चम्पकानां

19 I can make an exquisite variety of
garlands. Formerly
I was employed by Satyabhāmā,
dear wife of Krishna,

20 And Draupadī, wife of the Pāṇḍavas, by Kṛṣṇā-
and the loveliest ~~lady~~ ever Kaurava lady. humour!

कृष्णां वै भार्यां पाण्डवानां कुरूणामेकसुन्दरीम्

लक्ष्मीः पद्मालया का त्वमथ भूतिः Transcreation
ह्रीः श्रीः कीर्तिरथो सुमध्यमे।
कान्तिरासां का त्वं वरानने॥

12 "Who are you, graceful beauty,
and whose ? How
have you come to Virāṭa, lovely one ?
Tell me the truth.

वरानने शोभने

13 You are graceful, you are lovely.
You are gentle.
Your face shines with the beauty
of the full moon.

कान्त्या विभाति
वक्त्रं ते शशांक
इव निर्मलम्

14 Lovely-eyebrowed, perfect-figured one !
Cāru-sarvāṅginī !
Your eyes are large lotus petals, your
voice sweet as a koel's.

वाक्यं
परपुष्टरुतोपमम्

15 Lovely-hipped lady, faultless one !
Never in my life
have I come across a lady with
beauty like yours.

सुश्रोणि अनिन्दिते

16 Are you lotus-enshrined Lakṣmī, are
you Prosperity embodied ?
Are you Modesty ? Are you Śrī ? Are you
Fame and Bewitchment, O lovely-faced one?

17 Are you the goddess of love Rati
dallying in the arms
of Kāma ? ~~Sweet-faced~~ one, your face
dazzles like the moon.
lovely-eyebrowed one,

अतीवरूपिणी
त्वमनङ्गाङ्ग-
विहारिणी

18 Your face is radiant with the halo
of the moon, your
smile is moonlight, your eyelashes
its dark spots —

दिव्यकान्ति-
मनोरमम्

19 Who is there in the world who
can resist the spell
of Kāma once he sees your face
of unparalleled beauty ?

20 Your breasts are large and round,
bewitchingly shaped,
with no space between them, worthy
of the finest garlands.

21 Lovely eye-browed, sweet-smiling one,
Cāru-hāsinī !
Your breasts are lotuses, they inflame me
like the whips of Kāma.

22 Slim beauty, your waist can be measured
between the fingers of
one's hands ; its three folds come from
your heavy-breasted slight stoop ;

23 Your enchanting hips are like the
banks of a river,
O lovely one ! And I am sorely stricken
with the passion of Kāma.

24 The fire of my passion consumes me
like a forest-blaze ;
all it desires is to be one with you,
O lovely one.

25 Beautiful-hipped lady ! Quench this fire
kindled by Kāma
with the rain of surrender from the
cloud of our intercourse.

26 Lady with the beauty of the moon !
I am driven wild
by the arrows of Kāma, and the hope
of intercourse with you.

the whole family
pays for the evil that is done by
one erring member.

21 I am convinced, you are as good
as gone to Yama. Dharmarāja
And you will drag your kinsfolk
too with you. → सर्वं स्वजनं घातयिष्यसि

22 And the saddest thing is that I know
what is right but

GITA PRESS no meat
भक्ष्यांश्च विविधाकारान्
बहूंश्चोच्चावचांस्तदा ।

CRITICAL EDITION
आजौरभ्रम् च सुभृशं
बहूंश्चोच्चावचान् मृगान्

or varied meat-dishes venison

ove him. भ्रातृसौहृदात्

lf —

ght —

ellent → सुरमन्नम्

u

vin her सान्त्वमाना

26 Following the advice of his sister,
Kicaka left
and ordered wines prepared worthy
of a ~~king~~ rājā.

27 He also ordered various dishes cooked, भक्ष्यान् विविधाकारान्
along with different
meat-preparations and ~~soothing~~ drinks — refreshing
all by the best cooks.

28 Having done this, Kīcaka invited
devī Sudeṣṇā
to dinner. Like a noose-tied
animal, Kīcaka

29 Had no idea he was inviting
his own death.
The absolute fool had one obsession :
intercourse with Draupadī.

30 "I have ordered sweet wines, Sudeṣṇā,"
Kīcaka said,
"and the finest dishes. Now you must
get the *sairandhri* here.

31 Get her to come to me on some
pretence of work.
Fulfil my heart's one desire.
I have propitiated Śiva
saying, 'Lord, grant me intercourse with
her, or take my life.' "

32 Sudeṣṇā sighed deeply and said
(continued Vaiśampâyana) :
"Go to your room. I will ask her to
bring wine for you."

33 Revolving thoughts of the *sairandhrī*
in his mind, vicious
Kīcaka quickly went to his mansion
and waited for her.

34 Sudeṣṇā instructed the *sairandhrī*
to go to the mansion
of Kīcaka : "Fortune-favoured one,
go to Kīcaka's
mansion, and get some wine for me.
My throat is parched."

आवर्ताः खलु चत्वारः चैव प्रदक्षिणाः

74 She who has the four graceful curves, all half-circling auspiciously to the right — how did he dare kick such a lady?

75 This lotus-eyed lady whose hands, feet and teeth have no space between them — how did he dare kick her?

76 She who is as lovely as fortune-favoured deva-devi Sakra-Indra's wife Indrani, as enchanting as an an apsara — she does not deserve to be kicked."

77 Yudhisthira listened to the puja-respect given to Krsna-Draupadi by the sabha-members, and angry sweat broke out on his forehead.

युधिष्ठिरस्य कोपात् तु ललाटे स्वेद आगमत्

तूष्णीमासीत्

78 Lovely-thighed Draupadī kept sighing
and staring at the floor,
and silently waited, for Yudhiṣṭhira
was about to say something.

79 ~~Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira looked at~~
his beloved royal wife
and said: "Sairandhrī! Go!
Go now to Sudeṣṇā's mansion!

राजपुत्रीं महिषीं प्रियां

अर्थतत्त्वमविज्ञाय किं नु स्यात्   Session 185

29 JUNE 2003

Professor P. Lal reads of Yudhisthira's refusal to come to Draupadi's aid, and her appeal to Bhima to revenge her molestation by Kichaka in the court of Virata, in the 185th weekly Sunday session of his complete English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 29 June 2003 at 11 a.m.

69 This faultless-figured, ~~exceedingly~~ graceful
lady has no equal
on earth. To us she seems to be
a perfect blameless devi.

गात्रं शुभं

70 A radiant, healthy body ; loveliness
outshining the lotus' ;
the gait of a *hamsa* ; a *kunda*-flower
smile ; ~~supreme~~ grace abounding ;

मुखं जयति
पङ्कजम्

71 All thirty-two teeth firmly set and
brilliantly white ;
glossy, soft hair — how did he dare
kick such a lady ?

स्निग्धा श्च
मृदवः केशा

72 This lady who has three elegant folds on
her stomach, ~~all~~
all three enchantingly noticeable — how did he dare
kick such a lady ?

73 She who possesses the auspicious signs
of lotus, *cakra*, crown,
conch, temple, and *makara* — how did he dare
kick such a lady ?

पद्मं चक्रं ध्वजं
शङ्खं
प्रासादो मकरस्तथा

भेयं योग्या पदा वधम्

80 Brave women wives who are devoted to their husbands
sometimes to have suffer silently,

80 Brave wives devoted to their husbands
sometimes have to suffer in silence —
but that suffering takes them to the realms
obtained by their husbands.

81 It seems that your radiant gandharva husbands सूर्यवर्चसः
do not think this the
right time to show their anger, or come
run to your help.

केशान्ते 82 Lovely-wavy-haired lady ! Listen to what I say ~~words about~~
about the dharma of mokṣa.
This is what dharma says about
the family dharma of women. कुलस्त्रीणां धर्मः

śrāddhas,

या च भर्तरि शुश्रूषा सा स्वर्गायाभिजायते

is to

a woman is never free. As a girl,

पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने । पुत्रस्तु स्थविरे भावे and ; in old age,
न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥ nd

and slanders from enemies, but never
criticises her husband.

क्षमः: patience, forebearance, forgiveness. (Apte)

86 In this way faithful wives achieve
realms of high merit. पुण्यलोकं
Even Vṛtra-slaying Indra is incapable
of defeating your angry husbands.

87 Large-and-lovely-eyed lady, recall
any understanding you have
with your husbands. ~~There is~~ No dharma
excels patience ~~higher than forgiveness~~, O forgiving lady. क्षमशीले

क्षम: patient, enduring, bearing, submissive, resisting (MHB: Monier-Williams), to be patient or composed, suppress anger, keep quiet (MHB)

88 Forgiveness is truth,
Forgiveness is charity,
Forgiveness is dharma,
Forgiveness is tapasyā.
This world and the next
Are only attainable
For those who practise
The virtue of forgiveness.

89 Two sides,
Twelve limbs,
Twentyfour aspects,
Three hundred and sixty spokes
Such is Time.
Remember this,
And learn to forgive if a month falls short."

90 Draupadī heard (continued Vaiśampāyana),
and stood silent.
Yudhiṣṭhira went on : "*Sairandhri*, you
don't know the occasion,
you weep like an actress ; everyone's
laughing at you here.

91 So go back. The gandharvas know what
is good for you,
They will remove your sorrow and the man
who has harmed you."

92 Draupadī said : "I will follow dharma
for the sake of my
forgiving husbands, the eldest of whom
is addicted to dice.
It seems to me that they will be
exploited by everyone."

93 Saying this, beautiful Draupadī, hair
dishevelled and eyes

flaming with frustration, ran towards
the mansion of Sudeṣṇā.

94 Her continuous weeping had washed
her face and she looked
as lovely as the moon freed from
clutching clouds.

95 Like a graceful dust-smeared elephant,
the beautiful Draupadī
(whose thighs resembled the curves of an
elephant's trunk)
listened to the advice of her husband,
and left the sabhā.

96 Her breasts had no space between them,
her eyes were like
a deer's. She escaped from Kīcaka, like
the moon from clouds.

97 The Pāṇḍavas would gladly give their
lives for her sake, yet these
chose to be silent and
posed as forgiving.
They did not know their prowess,
the ocean its shores.

98 "Graceful-hipped lady," Sudeṣṇā said,
"who has hurt you,
why are you crying ? Whose happiness
is doomed to end today ?

99 Lotus-lovely lady, with radiant eyes
and lips, why is your
full moon-face smeared with tears ?
Wipe them away.

100 You who have the lovely black eyes
of a wooden doll,

130 He was a ferocious warrior, he knew
all the arts and skills
of war, he challenged Dharma itself.
(Bāṇa was Kīcaka).

131 With the help of power-intoxicated
Kīcaka, king Virāṭa
extended his kingdom far and wide, as
Indra with the anti-gods.

132 The Mekhalas, Trigartas, Daśārṇas, Kaśerukas,
Mālavas, Yavaṇas, Pulindas, Kāśis, Kosalas,

133 Aṅgas, Baṅgas, Kaliṅgas, Taṅgaṇas, Parataṅgaṇas,
Maladas, Niṣadhas, Tuṇḍikeras, Koṅkṇas.

134 Karadas, Niṣiddhas, Śivas, Duṣshallikas,
And many other brave soldiers of various armies
Were defeated by Kīcaka, and their lands annexed.

135 That is why Virāṭa appointed the
ten-thousand-elephant-
strong Kīcaka as the commander of
his armed forces.

136 The ten brothers of Kīcaka were considered
as powerful as the
son of Daśaratha, Rāma. They were devoted
followers of Kīcaka.

137 The power-filled hero Kīcaka, Virāṭa's
brother-in-law,
considered none his equal in prowess,
not even Virāṭa.

138 I have given you a detailed account
of Kīcaka's accomplishments.
Let me now tell you why Draupadī
did not curse him.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [IV : 16 | 139 - 144]

139 Hatred destroys tapasyā, for which reason
holy men are slow
to cast curses. Draupadī, aware of this,
refrained from cursing.

140 Forgiveness is dharma,
Forgiveness is charity,
Forgiveness is yajña.
Forgiveness is glory,
Forgiveness is truth,
Forgiveness is patience,
Forgiveness is fame,
Forgiveness is firm

141 Forgiveness is merit,
Forgiveness is *tīrtha*,
Forgiveness is all.
So says *śruti*.
This world belongs
To those who forgive,
Draupadī, knowing this,
Chose to forgive.

142 Realising the wishes of her dharma-firm,
forgiveness-inclined husbands,
the large-eyed, chaste lady decided not
to curse Kīcaka.

143 All the Pāṇḍavas witnessed the shame
of Draupadī,
but silently suppressed the flames
of their anger.

144 Strong-armed Bhīma was ready to crush
Kīcaka on the spot,
but shore-steady Yudhiṣṭhira checked his
ocean-billowing rage.

5 *Who but Bhīma can do what I*
dearly want done ?
With this thought she rose and left
her bed that night,

6 The large-eyed lady ~~with opulent~~
~~breasts and~~ wifely
devotion, the husbands-protected lady,
~~and~~ went to Bhīma.

7 She was deeply troubled, she trembled
as she went.
She said : "So long as the vicious
general, my molester,

8 Lives, how can you even think of
sleeping soundly ?"
She said this immediately as she
entered the room.

9 Bhīma lay there fast asleep, snoring ~~like a~~
lion. The room
was ablaze with her beauty and
mahātmā Bhīma's splendour.

10 ~~Sensuous,~~ Sweet-smiling Draupadī, approached Bhīma
with the passion of a
three-year old cow mating with a bull
in her first season,
like a she-crane going to her male
at the time of pairing.

11 The princess of Pāñcāla twined herself
round Pāṇḍu's ~~second~~ son
as a creeper embraces a huge śāla-tree
on the Gomati's banks.

12 She clasped him firmly in her arms ;
faultless-figured Draupadī

[Handwritten annotations: "मनसः प्रियम्" ; "Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī," ; "a lady of" ; "chaste" ; "like a rājā-of-beasts" ; "शाला प्रजज्वाल तस्य रूपेण भीमस्य महात्मनः" ; "Pāñcālī-" ; "middle" ; "लतेव महाशालं" ; "Middle: Yudhiṣṭhira is first, Arjuna is third, Bhīma second, Nakula-Sahadeva fourth (twins). Since Arjuna is now a eunuch, Bhīma is middle"]

woke him as a lioness wakes
a lion in a lonely forest ~~lion~~. मृगराज

13 She received him as a she-elephant
takes in a massive
tusker. The faultless Pāñcāla princess, महाराज
in a voice as sweet अनिन्दिता
as the melody of a ~~gandharva~~ rāga,
said to Bhīma : Gāndhāra,

14 "Get up, Bhīma ! Why do you sleep
like a corpse ?
scoundrel
Are you dead, that the ~~swine~~ lives after पापी
molesting your wife ?"

15 Cloud-dark-skinned Bhīma, stirred out
of his deep sleep,
left his bed and sat on the
cushion-decorated couch.

16 Kuntī's son said to his beloved
wife : "What is wrong ?
What has made you come rushing
to me like this ?

Worried
17 You look pale and ~~disturbed~~ — your
grace is disturbed.
You look harassed. Tell me everything,
in every detail.

18 Sad news or glad news, pain-producing
or pleasure-giving,
tell me the truth. I will do what I
can, once I know.

Kṛṣṇā-
19 You know, Draupadi, ~~that~~ you can
completely trust me

सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं द्वेष्यं वा यदि वा प्रियम् ।

पश्य कालस्य पर्ययम्

See! times

47 How things change! Handsome and brave
and intelligent Nakula
must now content himself with feeding
the horses of Virāṭa!

48 His enemies fled in terror when they
saw him on the
battlefield — now Granthika trains horses
for the mahārāja! See!

49 I can see him, gracefully waiting
on the glitteringly-
dressed king of the Matsyas, exhibiting
his trained horses!

O foe-crushing Pārtha-Bhīma!

50 Sorrowful Pṛthā, a thousand sorrows
are mine because of
Yudhiṣṭhira. Can you ever think I
can be happy? → किं नु मां मन्यसे सुखिनी

51 And there are so many other sorrows
that I have, even
greater ones. Kuntī's son, listen to me.
I will tell you. → कौन्तेय वक्ष्यामि शृणु तान्यपि

52 That all these sorrows should be mine
while all of you
are still alive — what sorrow can be
greater than this?" किं नु दुःखमतः परम्

SECTION 20

1 "It's because of that compulsive gambler,"
continued Draupadī,
"that I am now a *sairandhrī* in
Sudeṣṇā's service.

2 O foe-crusher, I am a princess — look
at my pitiful
downfall ! Experiencing the worst, I still
hope for the best.

3 Well, success is short, victory and
defeat are brief.
I think of this, and hope my husbands
will again prosper.

प्रतिक्षामि भर्तृणाम् उद्यम् पुनः

4 Prosperity and poverty revolve like
a wheel. Bhīma,
I think of this, and hope my husbands
will again prosper.

5 Whatever leads to victory, leads to
defeat also.
I live on that hope. Why don't you
treat me as dead ?

त्वा याचन्ति पुरुषा त्वा वध्यन्ति चापरे

6 I have heard that those who give,
one day may beg ; have to
those who kill, get killed ; those who
mock, may get mocked.

दैवस्य अति-भारोऽस्ति न वास्य प्रतिवर्तनम्

7 Nothing's beyond the scope of fate,
no one changes fate.
And so I wait, hoping for the return
of good fortune.

8 There will be water again where there
once was water.
I wait for this change, for better
times to come.

9 When ~~something goes wrong with~~ fate brings down a flourishing
business, a man
should take steps to ~~bring it back~~ correct
~~to successful working.~~
what fate has undone.

दैवस्य चागमे यत्नस्तेन कार्यो विजानता

पापात्मा पापभावश्च कामबाणवशानुगः

40 His ātman is bent on vice, he thinks
only of viciousness,
he is a complete victim of kāma's arrows ;
I repeatedly begged him,

41 But I know he will molest me when
he gets the chance.
Then I will kill myself. I have made
up my mind.
Where will your dharma be then, O my
dharma-seeking husbands ?

mahā-

तद् धर्मं यतमानानां महान् धर्मो नाशयति

42 You will keep your word, but you will
lose your wife.
If a wife is protected, one's children
are also protected.

43 If one's children are protected, one's
ātman has refuge.
No wonder the wise call a wife 'Jāya',
'From-whom-one's-born', (one-is)
because the ātman is born as one's son
in a wife's womb.

44 The wife also should cherish her husband,
saying, 'How otherwise
will he be born in my womb ?' So say
the knowers of caste-dharma.

वदतां वर्णधर्माः

45 What dharma has a Kṣatriya except to
crush his enemies ?
Kīcaka kicked me in front of dharmarāja
Yudhiṣṭhira,

46 In front of you, mighty-armed Bhīma. (O mahā-powerful)
O brave Bhīma,
it was you who rescued me from the
fierce Jaṭāsura ;

47 It was you who, along with your brothers,
saved me from Jayadratha.
I beg of you — kill this ~~vicious~~ wretch depraved,
who has molested me.

48 Because he is the king's favourite, he
dares to harm me.
Crush this monster of kāma to pulp, smash
him like a clay pot. कुम्भमिव

49 If tomorrow the sun rises on a Kīcaka

भार्यायां रक्ष्यमाणानां
प्रजा भवति रक्षिता ।

he sole cause

आत्मा हि जायते तस्यां
तेन जायां विदुर्बुधाः ।

: I will drink

Bhīma, let me die

d her head

भर्ता तु भार्यया
रक्ष्यः कथं
जायान्ममोदरे ।

'raced her and-

raisted lady

guished daughter
ds,

क्षत्रियस्य सदा
धर्मो नान्यः
शत्रुनिवर्हणात् ।

with anger as

face and thought

s of his mouth

"When the *sairandhrī* comes, tell her
on my behalf,

9 '*Sairandhrī*, you are free to go wherever
you like. May you
prosper! Lovely-eye-browed one, the king
fears the gandharvas.

10 He is afraid to speak to you in person,
because the gandharvas
protect you. He says this through me,
a harmless woman.' "

11 Untied by Bhima after the slaughter
of the Sūtas
(Vaiśampāyana continued), Draupadī went
to the city.

12 After washing her body and dress
in water. She
went like a tiger-frightened doe,
now free from fear.

13 Seeing her, the citizens fled helter-
skelter, afraid of
the wrath of the gandharvas. Some
even closed their eyes.

14 The princess of Pāñcāla glimpsed
Bhīma standing at
the kitchen gate like a giant
enraged elephant.

15 With admiring eyes she looked at him,
and quickly whispered :
"I offer namaskāra to the gandharva king
who freed me."

16 Bhima replied : "All those who were here
obedient to you
will be pleased by your words, and consider
their debt discharged."

maha-muscled Dhanañjaya-

17 Draupadī saw the ~~strong-armed~~ Arjuna

बृहन्नले किं नु तव
सैरन्ध्र्या कार्यमद्य वै।
या त्वम् वससि कल्याणि
सदा कन्यापुरे सुखम्

of

om the

approaching.
upadī ~~coming~~.

are free !

no harmed

you are killed."

20 "Are you really free, *sairandhrı* ?" exclaimed
Bṛhannalā. "Are the
vicious rascals really dead ? Tell me
exactly what happened."

21 "Why, Bṛhannalā," replied Draupadī,
"how are you concerned
about the *sairandhrī* ? You are happy enough
in the girls' apartments, you lucky girl.

22 What do you know about the sorrows
of the *sairandhrī* ?
You must be joking. You are making fun
of my grief."

प्रहसन्निव

कल्याणि

23 "Fortune-favoured lady," said Bṛhannalā,
"Bṛhannalā has griefs
too, terrible ones. She is fallen into the womb

4 Indeed, all of them are obedient to
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
who has no enemies, and is deeply
devoted to his brothers.

5 Why shouldn't Yudhiṣṭhira who knows
the secrets of success
look after the welfare of such excellent
mahātmā brothers ?

6 That is why they are biding their time.
They can never
be frustrated — my commonsense tells
me that clearly.

7 Do not think twice — act quickly and
act decisively.
There is no time to lose — immediacy
is essential.

8 Decide on how the Pāṇḍavas are
to be accommodated ;
the brave, faultless, self-disciplined Pāṇḍavas
cannot be detected.

9 Yudhiṣṭhira has a pure ātman, all the
virtues, he is truth-
speaking, far-seeing ; he can consume with
his radiant gaze.

10 Act on this knowledge. We should arrange
to send Brahmin
spies and noble-charactered men to search
for the Pāṇḍavas."

श्रुतवान् देशकालज्ञस्तत्त्वज्ञः सर्वधर्मवित्

SECTION 28

1 The grandfather of the Bharatas, son-
of-Śāntanu Bhīṣma,
wise in *śruti*, Kāla, and Truth, proficient
in all dharmas,

time, place,

2 After the ~~speech of his~~ suggestion of ācarya Droṇa,
gave it approval
and added the following for the welfare
of the Bharatas,

3 His words showing his preference for
dharma-wise Yudhiṣṭhira,
words such as dishonest men avoid
and honest men ~~love.~~ appreciate.

असत्सु दुर्लभां नित्यं सतां च अभिमतां सदा

Bhīṣma said these words which all wise
men ~~appreciate~~: value:
"Whatever the all-truth-knowing Brahmin Droṇa
says, I approve.

5 They have all the auspicious marks,
they keep all the
holy vows, they are wise in *śruti* and
follow *śruti* principles,

सर्वलक्षणसम्पन्ना

6 They obey the instructions of their elders,
they are firm in the
practice of truth, they are pure, they know
what is opportune,

सत्यव्रतपरायणा

7 They are acquainted with the dharma
of the Kṣatriyas,
they are devotees of Keśava, - Krishna, they are ~~mighty~~ mahā- powerful
mahātmā heroes who
know the duties of the good — the Pāṇḍavas
cannot be ~~worsted~~. destroyed. overcome.

SECTION 30

1 The rājā of Trigarta named Suśarmā
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
a powerful ruler who controlled many
chariots, spoke up :

2 "Sire, I have been defeated time and again
by the Sūta of
Matsya, Kīcaka, and by the forces
of Śālva.

3 Powerful lord, I and my relatives
have been repeatedly
humiliated." He said this, glancing at
Karṇa and Duryodhana.

4 "The rājā of Matsya has repeatedly
invaded my kingdom
and humbled my soldiers, assisted by
his general Kīcaka.

5 That wicked-thinking, atrocity-perpetrating
general whose ill-fame
spread all over the world, has been killed
by the gandharvas.

6 With him dead, rājā Virāṭa is left
without any protector.
His confidence is sapped, his pride gone,
he is defenceless.

7 Faultless sire, if this pleases you
and the Kauravas,
including mahātmā Karṇa, I suggest
we should attack.

8 This opportunity comes as an unexpected
benefit to us.

Let us go now and annex his corn-
abundant kingdom.

9 Let us appropriate all his jewels
and other wealth,
and share his villages and provinces
among ourselves.

10 Let us make a determined assault
and make off
with his thousands of magnificent
cattle of all kinds.

11 Lord, let us join the Kauravas and
the Trigartas,
and carry off all the countless
herds of cattle.

12 Let us attack together, and extricate
his manly glory ;
let us wipe out his army, and make
him our captive.

13 Once he is legally under our control,
we can continue
to live peacefully ; our strength will grow
from more to more."

14 Karna heard this plan, and said to
rājā Duryodhana :
"Suśarmā speaks well. This is a good
chance for us.

15 Faultless one, if you approve, we
will take immediate
steps to unite our forces and marshal
them in ranks.

16 Or let us seek the advice of the
Kuru elders —

under severe pressure from the Trigartas, fled
in all directions.

13 Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī, saw them महाबाहुं अरिंदमं
scatter in fear,
and said to ~~mighty-armed slayer~~ mahā-muscled,
slayer of-enemies Bhīma :

14 "The Matsya-rājā is now a captive
of Suśarmā of O mahā-muscled
the Trigartas. ~~Strong~~ one, free him
from his oppressors. सुखं

15 We have passed our days contentedly → सर्वकामैः
in his palace, and received his pūjā-respect.
It is your duty, Bhīma, to pay back सपूजिताः
the debt we owe him."

16 Bhīma replied : "I will obey you
and set him free. पश्य मे सुमहत् कर्म
Watch me as I move forward to
rout my enemies ! → युध्यतः सह शत्रुभिः

17 Step to one side with your brothers,
and observe ~~how~~, O rājā,
how I employ my strength and weapons
to crush them !

18 Watch me uproot this massive tree सुस्कन्धो
that looks like an like → महावृक्षो
elephant's trunk, and wield it as a mace
against my enemies." गदारूप

19 Yudhiṣṭhira saw his brother eyeing the tree
like a wild elephant ;
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira (continued Vaiśampāyana)
told his brave brother :

मा भीमं साहसं वनस्पतिः

20 "Don't be reckless, Bhīma ! Leave the
tree alone !
You must not go about showing your कर्माणि
superhuman strength. → अतिमानुषम्

21 They will spot you immediately —
'That is Bhīma !'
भीमोऽयमिति o Descendant of Bharata, find yourself अन्यदेवायुधं
some other weapon, →

22 Such as a bow, or dart, or sword, or चापं शक्तिं
even a battle-axe.
Bhīma! Take a weapon humans use, so that परश्वधम्
you remain undetected,

23 And with it go and free the king.
maha-powerful Your twin brothers
will cover the left and right flanks
of your chariot ;

24 Together you will set free the rājā
of Matsya "
Taking this advice, ~~mighty-armed~~ mahā-powerful and
swift Bhīma

25 Lifted a magnificent bow, the श्रेष्ठं सुमहाजवं
finest available,
and shot a swarm of rain-like
arrows at Suśarmā. शरवर्षाणि

26 Bhīma singled out Suśarmā, famed for
his terrifying prowess.
तिष्ठ तिष्ठ He glanced at Virāṭa and shouted to Suśarma
इति ← "Stop ! Stop !"
27 Suśarmā ~~turned~~ looked back, ~~and looked,~~ the bull-brave chariot hero
चावदत् saw Bhīma रथपुङ्गव
bearing down on him shouting
"Stop ! Stop !

स्नेह = oiliness, unctuousness, greasiness, fattiness, lubricity, viscidity; oil, grease, fat; smoothness, glossiness, blandness.

tenderness, love, friendship.

...nd

...ity

वृद्धोऽपि तरुणो यथा
nonetheless,

away,

"Stop, prince! You have no right to
flee the field!"

राजपुत्र निवर्तस्व न ते युक्तं पलायनम्

46 Was this the power (valour) that made you
steal the cattle?
Abandoning your followers, and running
from your enemies?"

47 Mocked by Pṛthā's (Kuntī's) son, powerful Suśarmā,
lord of chariots, (रथयूथपः)
turned and suddenly pounced on Bhīma,
shouting, "Stop! Stop!"

48 Alighting from his chariot, mighty (Valiant) Bhīma,
son of Pāṇḍu,
calmly waited for Suśarmā, determined to
take his life.

49 Even as the king of Trigarta bore
down upon him,
brave Bhīma jumped, like a lion
on a young deer.

सिंहः क्षुद्रमृगं यथा

50 He held Suśarmā by the hair,
and bodily lifted
him from the ground, and then hurled
him down violently.

घृणा = घृ = ghee, clarified butter (*)

1. heat, ardour, sunshine; warm feeling towards others, compassion, tenderness (MHB)

aversion, contempt, horror, disgust (Kādambarī, Naiṣadha-carita)

...oaning
...icked
...t

...nd.

...nā unconscious.

...ariot-hero, unchariotcd
and made captive,
the Trigarta defence disintegrated, the army
was fear-bound.

53 The chariot-heroes, the Pāṇḍavas, recovered
mahā-
all the cattle,
and humbled Suśarmā. They appropriated
all his wealth.

स्वबाहुबलसम्पन्ना ह्रीनिषेवा यतव्रता

54 The self-sufficient Pāṇḍavas, self-effacing
and vow-observing, mahātmās,
removers of the sorrows of the king
of Matsya,

परिक्लेशविनाशना।

55 Stood before him. Bhīma said to the
king of Matsya :
"This vicious scoundrel does not deserve
to be freed
by me. But what can I do ? The
rāja is forgiving."

घृण (*)

56 He gripped unconscious Suśarmā's neck,
pulled him up,
and trussed his limp captive,
Wolf-waisted Bhīma

न अयं पापसमाचारो मत्तो जीवितुमर्हति ।
किं तु शक्यं मया कर्तुं यद् राजा सततं घृणी ॥

as a she-elephant runs
to a great tusker.

4 The radiantly lovely
and large-eyed daughter,
the gem of Virata,
the Lakṣmī of Indra,
frontally enchanting,
spoke sweetly to Arjuna.

5 And Arjuna then questioned
the tight-thighed princess
of golden complexion :
"Gold-garlanded princess,
doe-eyed beauty,
where are you running,?
Why is your face
sad-seeming ? Tell me,
O exquisite lady."

6 Seeing his *sakhī*, the large-eyed princess,
looking somewhat depressed,
Arjuna smiled and asked her the reason
for her low spirits.

7 The princess approached that bull among
men and surrounded
by her *sākhīs*, in a loving voice
said to Arjuna :

8 "Bṛhannala, the cattle of my father
are being robbed
by the Kurus. My brother, armed with bow,
is soon marching out.

9 Some days ago his charioteer was killed
in a battle,

and he can find no one to take the
charioteer's place.

10 Bṛhannalā, he mentioned this in front
of the *sairandhrī*,
and she said you were an expert in
the ways of horses,

हयज्ञाने

11 And that you used to be the charioteer of
bull-brave Pāṇḍava Arjuna, whom
you helped conquer the earth. This is
what she said.

पाण्डवर्षभं

12 Our cattle have been taken far away
by the ~~Kurus~~. Kauravas.
O Bṛhannalā, I beg of you — please
help my brother !

13 I ask you this with love. If today
you refuse to help
as I have asked you, I will certainly
commit suicide."

प्रणयादुच्यमाना

परित्यक्ष्यामि जीवितम्

14 At the request of his lovely-hipped *sakhī*,
the foe-punishing
hero Arjuna of ~~extraordinary~~ illimitable prowess hurried
to the prince.

सुश्रोण्या सख्या

अमितौजसः

15 The large-eyed princess kept pace with
his swift steps,
following him as a she-elephant follows
a rutting herd-leader.

16 The prince saw him coming and shouted :
"With you as charioteer,
Kuntī's son Arjuna ~~satisfied~~ the fire
of Khāṇḍava-forest.
gratified

खाण्डवेऽग्निमतर्पयत्

44 "Neither Arjuna, Krishna, Balarāma nor
even Pradyumna
will dare to challenge us on the field
of battle.

45 If anyone dares come here disguised
as a hermaphrodite
to take away these cattle, I will level
him with the ground.

46 What man is there who dares to face
us single-handed ?"
The others whispered, "Can it be Arjuna ?
No, it's not him."

47 The great chariot-warriors were undecided
in this matter.
Some whispered : "He is powerful as Indra, he
humbles his enemies.

48 If it really is he who is here to fight,
our army is doomed."
They could not, however, be sure that
it was Arjuna.

49 Meanwhile, Arjuna sprinted after the
fleeing Uttara,
and, within a hundred strides, seized him
by his hair.

50 Held fast by Arjuna, Virāṭa's son
Uttara burst out
into a long, piteous moaning, like
one totally desolated :

51 "Oh lovely, slim-waisted Bṛhannalā,
my beautiful one !
Turn back the chariot ! He who lives
is he who prospers.

शातकुम्भस्य शुद्धस्य शतं निष्कान् ददामि ते ।
मणीनष्टौ च वैदूर्यान् हेमबद्धान् महाप्रभान् ॥

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52 I offer you a hundred gold coins,
I offer you
eight dazzling, gold-encrusted stones
of lapis lazuli,

53 I offer you a golden-flagstaffed
chariot pulled by
magnificent horses, and ten musth elephants.
Let me go, Bṛhannalā !"

54 Tiger-among-men Arjuna held on firmly
to the wailing,
bewildered Uttara, and pulled him towards
the chariot.

55 Arjuna said to the sense-deprived and
fear-stricken prince :
"Foe-crusher, if you are afraid to
fight your enemies,
here, hold the reins and let me
at least fight them.

56 Let the strength of my powerful arms
lead you into
the centre of that tremendous cavalry-guarded
array of heroes.

57 Cast off your fear, prince ! Vanquisher
of your foes,
How can you despair in front of
your adversaries ?

58 Look, I will strike deep inside their
ranks, I will fight
the Kauravas and rout them, and then
recover the cattle.

मा भैस्त्वं राजपुत्राग्र्य क्षत्रियोऽसि परंतप ।
कथं पुरुषशार्दूल शत्रुमध्ये विषीदसि ॥

बीभत्सुः अपराजितः

नरश्रेष्ठ O finest of men!

59 Just be my charioteer, and let me
do the fighting." Dreadful-deed-doer Bibhatsu-
With these words, never-defeated Arjuna
re-inspired Virāṭa's son.

Pārtha-

60 Excellent Arjuna, best of repressors, प्रहरतां वरः
assisted the fear-
भयपीडितम् paralysed, unwilling-to-fight prince
into the chariot.

61 He succeeded in persuading Uttara to
be his charioteer
He directed Uttara to the śami-tree where
Gāṇḍīva- his bow was hidden.

SECTION 39

bull-brave hero

1 Seeing that finest of men sitting in the नरपुङ्गव
chariot dressed as a
क्लीबवेषेण hermaphrodite, being driven by Uttara
to the śami-tree,

excellent Kauravas

2 The mighty chariot-warriors of the Kurus
led by Bhīṣma
and Droṇa were overcome by their fear
Dhanañjaya- of Arjuna.

3 Droṇa saw their morale droop ; he saw हतोत्साहान्
strange omens appear ;
गुरुः guru Droṇa, super-excelling arms-wielder, son of
Bharadvāja, said :
शस्त्रभृतां श्रेष्ठो

4 "Fierce, dry winds scatter dust and grit रूक्षाः शर्कर-
in the sky. वर्षिणः
The sky is enveloped with an ash-
grey darkness.

भस्मवर्णप्रकाशेन तमसा संवृतं नभः

नदीज लङ्केशवनारिकेतु- ape-bannered 5-11] 29

र्नगाह्वयो नाम नगारिसूनुः। Indra's son ds look withered दृश्यन्ते

by themselves अदत्तदर्शनाः

एषोऽङ्गनावेषधरः किरीटी ie jackals दीप्तायां

जित्वा वयं नेष्यति चाद्य ts, and flags दिशि

गावः॥

tree-named (Arjuna) ;ns of dread दारुणाः

Indra cut off wings of mountains, only Maináka, Himavat's son, escaped ike soon.

So be prepared.

8 Be on your guard. Take steps to form रक्षध्वमपि
the army ranks.
रक्षध्वं Protect the cattle. Be prepared for चात्मानं
गोधनम a bloody slaughter.

9 The all-weapons-expert hero, ~~The excellent hero,~~ the maha- ~~great~~ archer महेष्वासः
who is here today
disguised as a hermaphrodite, is surely
~~the son of Kunti~~ Pṛthā-Kunti's son.

नदीज 10 O son of a river, Bhīṣma!
The girl-disguised man
is the son of the foe
Indra, of mountains, his flag
has the sign of the Laṅkā-destroyer
Hanumān. ~~destroyer~~. I think
we are doomed at his hands
today; h~~e will take~~ the diademed hero will take
back the cattle we have.

Savyasāci Pārtha.
11 He is ~~mighty~~ Arjuna, the ambidexterous
destroyer of foes —

"because I enjov the wealth of the lands

न कुर्यां कर्म बीभत्सं (*)
युध्यमान: कथंचन |
तेन देवमनुष्येषु
बीभत्सुरिति विश्रुत:

because

I return

-rider

iot are श्वेता: काञ्चनसंनाहा

s born

lguni was

17 I am Kirīti the Diademed One because
a sun-bright crown
was placed on my head by Indra when I
battled the anti-gods. Śakra- Dānava-

18 I am Bibhatsu the ~~Awesome~~ Loathsome One, so named
by gods and men
because I have never committed any atrocity
on the battlefield. (*)

19 I am Savyasācin the Ambidexterous One
to gods and men
because I ~~shoot~~ the Gāṇḍiva equally well
with both hands.

20 I am Arjuna the Spotless One because
my skin-clarity is
rarely found in the four-directioned earth ;
also, I do pure deeds. करोमि कर्म शुक्लं

(*) बीभत्स : name of Arjuna : loathsome, disgusting, revolting, hideous, envious, cruel, wicked, estranged in mind, abhorrent ; loathsomeness, detestableness (M-Williams)

the Triumphant One

21 I am Jiṣṇu to gods and men
because I am the undefeatable
unapproachable, irrepressible, ~~fearful~~ son
of Pāka-slaying Indra.

दशमं नाम

22 My tenth name Kṛṣṇa the Dark One
was given affectionately
by my father because I was the dark
boy of great purity."

प्रियत्वाद्

Pārtha-?

23 The son of Virāṭa approached Arjuna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said : "My name is Bhuminjaya,
also called Uttara.

24 It is my good fortune to have seen
you, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Dhanañjaya, I welcome you, O pink-
eyed warrior whose mahā-
muscled ~~whose mighty~~ arms resemble the
trunks of elephants.

लोहिताक्ष महाबाहो नागराजकरोपम

क्षन्तुमर्हसि अज्ञानाद्

25 Forgive me all that I spoke earlier ;
I did not know.
You have accomplished such wonderful
superhuman feats —
my fear is all gone, I am filled
with love for you.

भयं व्यतीतं मे प्रीतिश्च परमा त्वयि

दासोऽहं ते भविष्यामि पश्य माम् अनुकम्पया

26 Let me be your slave ! Look on me
with compassion.
I am ready to be your charioteer,
as I promised.
My mind is firm. I am mahā-fortunate !
I am mahā-fortunate !"

जातं जातं भाग्यं च मे महत्

Savage, ferocious, malignant, mischievous, envious (Apte) - "MHB thus explains the word" !!!

24 AUGUST 2003

Professor P. Lal reads of Kripa and Asvatthaman's denigration of Karna's boast to killing Arjuna, and Bhisma's face-saving strategy for over-belligerent Duryodhana, in the 193rd weekly Sunday session of his complete English Transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 24 August 2003 at 11 a.m.

through an ant-hill. पन्नगाः

17 You will see the son of Kuntī,
smothered ~~hit~~ by my straight,
powerful, gold-feathered arrows, like a hill कर्णिकारैरिव
full of karṇikāra-blossoms. अचलम्

18 I obtained my weapons from Paraśurāma,
प्राप्तमृषिसत्तमात् son of Jamadagni,
an excellent ṛṣi; I will dare challenge
~~the gods themselves~~ Vāsava-Indra himself.

19 My ~~spear~~ bhalla-arrows will slice through the ape
on Arjuna's banner
and he will plummet down screaming पततां भूमौ
weird cries of pain. विनदन् भैरवान्

20 The sky will echo with the ~~screams~~ howls
भूतानां of the animals रवान्
who ride his flagstaff — they will
noisy flee in panic.

21 Today I will remove once and for all
the thorn that is
embedded in Duryodhana's heart, by
Bibhatsu- unchariotingArjuna.

22 The Kauravas will today see ~~Arjuna's~~ Pārthā-
chariot smashed, his
horses killed, his bravery gone, and he
helpless hissing like a snake.

23 Let the Kauravas make up their minds —
either go ~~away~~ leave
with the precious cattle, or stay and
watch the combat."

तिष्ठन्तो युद्धं
पश्यन्तु मामकम्

SECTION 49

Session 193
24 Aug 2003
Gita, p. 1974

सदैव तव राधेय
युद्धे क्रूरतरा मतिः।
नार्थानां प्रकृतिं वेत्सि
नानुबन्धमवेक्षसे॥

a "your
u ignore time
are mentioned
aid war is
olly.
t the right
~~ar resorted to~~
tself,
undertaken

पुराविदः

देशकालेन संयुक्तं
युद्धं विजयदं भवेत्

time and place. A chariot-maker's ~~words~~ assurances
are not enough to impress pandits.

5 When I analyse the situation, I find
it is foolhardy
to fight Arjuna. Alone he saved the ~~Kurus~~ Kauravas
and gratified Agni.

भारं हि रथकारस्य न व्यवस्यन्ति
पण्डिताः

22 The six of us together have power
enough to fight who is as
Partha-L and even repulse Arjuna, fierce as
the thunderbolt-wielder.

.... drawn up in careful

दृहति आग्निरावाक्य स्तु ods
तूष्णीं भाति दिवाकरः।
तूष्णीं धारयते लोकान्
वसुधा सचराचरम् ॥ are

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of pura.
One lesson that in every wind is blown thee,
Of work reflected in Tranquillity.-- never विपुलं धनं
Matthew Arnold: "Quiet Work"

3 Fire burns silently, the sun shines
silently. The earth *
sustains the moving and unmoving life
of the world, silently.

4 The activities of the four castes have
been ordained by Svayambhu-
Self-Born Brahmā to ensure prosperity
without ~~wickedness~~ misbehaviour. यच्च कुर्वन्
न दुष्यति

5 Brahmins study the Vedas and perform
the sacred rites and yajñas,
Kṣatriyas study bowcraft and offer ~~sacrifices~~ yajñas
but not as priests.

शूद्र: शुश्रूषणं कुर्यात् त्रिषु वर्णेषु नित्यशः

6. Vaiśyas gather wealth and have sacred rites
performed for them by Brahmins.
Śūdras serve the three other castes,
flattering them
and bowing ~~bamboo-like before them~~, to
earn a living.

Mahā-fortune-favoured
7 ~~Great~~ men follow the *śāstras* and obtain
महाभागा the earth's riches
by respecting their gurus even if the gurus
~~they are inimical~~ are not fully deserving. सुविगुणानपि

8 Is there any Kṣatriya who will joyfully
नृशंसरूपः flaunt the fact
~~that he won~~ a kingdom at dice, as shameless
निर्घृणः and cruel Duryodhana does?

9 Does a wise man boast of the fact
that he has used
cunning and fraud to become rich, वैतंसिक
as a ~~meat-seller~~ does? (butcher)
meat-seller

10 ~~You have taken away the wealth~~ of
Dhanañjaya Arjuna, Nakula
and Sahadeva — have you ever defeated
Chariot them in combat?

11 Have you ever defeated Yudhisthira or
Bhīma, the strongest बलिनां वरः
of the strong? When did you ever
conquer Indraprastha?

12 Did you win Kṛṣṇā Draupadī in a battle?
And yet, you scoundrel,
you dared to drag her in her period
in her single dress in the sabhā!

13 You have cut the very root of the मूलमेषां
sandalwood tree! → चन्दनं

एकवस्त्रा सभां नीता दुष्कर्मन् रजस्वला

16 Duryodhana said : "The āchārya will
forgive us and
restore peace. If the guru is pleased,
success is sure."

17 In this way (Vaiśampāyana continued)
Karṇa, Bhīṣma,
mahātmā Kṛpa and Duryodhana made
Droṇa forgive them.

18 Droṇa said : "The words of Bhīsma,
son of Śāntanu,
have pleased me. Let us now devise
a plan by which

19 Pārtha Arjuna may be prevented from face-
to-face encounter
with Duryodhana ; also, Duryodhana must
not be made prisoner,

20 Either by over-zealous bravery or by
a foolish mistake. → साहसाद् यदि वा मोहात्
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna will not show himself till the
thirteenth year expires.

21 He will not let us off simply by
recovering the cattle.
He must not be allowed to rout
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons

22 And our army. That will be our
strategy today. तथा नीतिर्विधीयतां
Duryodhana said almost the same
thing earlier.
Consider all this, Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma, and give
us your advice."

एवं कालविभागेन कालचक्रं प्रवर्तते

SECTION 52

1 "*Kalā, kāṣṭha, muhūrta*, days,
Fortnights, months, stars, planets,

2 Seasons, years — these are Time's divisions.
The wheel of Kāla revolves," said Bhisma.

3 "Because there are small surpluses in
the orbiting of
the constellations, two months' surplus
comes every five years.

4 If we were to calculate in this way,
there will be an
increase of five months and twelve nights *

lunar year = 354 days *
Solar year = 365 days + 15
ghaḍis (2½ min. each) +
some palas (24 seconds)
∴ 13 solar years
= 13 years + 6 days
13 lunar years
= 13 years + 5 months
+ 12 days

ered
atsu-
na is not here

ey know
They cannot

ly. They have

h. They will not

8 They could have displayed their prowess
at the start,
but they refrained because they respected
Kṣatriya dharma.

कौरवनन्दना:
delighters
of the
Kuru dynasty

in swarms on the chariots
of the ~~Kurus, like fire~~ bull-brave Kauravas
वनं यथाग्निः like fire devouring a forest.

कुरुपुङ्गवानां

9 The tempo of battle
युद्धे तुमुले grew more horrendous.
The ~~Kuru~~ Kaurava Vikarṇa
प्रवृत्ते hurled upon Arjuna,
younger brother of Bhīma,
a cluster of arrows. vipatha-

11 Uncontrollably angered,

10 Add (✱)

But Arjuna retaliated
with arrows that pierced कर्माणि
the jāmbū-gold-plated कुर्वन्तमानुषाणि.
bow of Vikarṇa Kaurava ranks,
and shredded his war-flag. → पञ्चभिराशु विद्धा
And Vikarṇa retreated. सूतं दशभिर्जघान

mour

like a wind-smitten ~~rock~~ tree
falling off a mountain.

14 ~~The greatness of~~ Bull-brave Arjuna
humbled the ~~greatness~~ glory
of the ~~Kaurava heroes.~~ bull-brave Kauravas.
mahā- They shook like ~~a~~ forests
caught in the winds
of the end of ~~time.~~ Kāla.

काले प्राकम्पितानीव महावनानि

15 Defeated in battle
by the son of Indra, Vāsava-
they slept on the ground
deprived of their lives,
heroic and well-dressed
donors of wealth,

16 Like gold-caparisoned
steel-armoured elephants
of high Himavat.
Killing his enemies,
the heroic wielder
of the Gāṇḍīva-bow

17 Rushed through the field
like flames consuming
a summer-dry forest.
Like a spring wind
scattering the withered
leaves and clouds,

O Wild West
West Wind
thou breath...

प्रकीर्णपर्णानि
यथा वसन्ते
विशातयित्वा पवनो
अम्बुदांश्च

18 Diadem-decked Kirītin ~~Chariot-warrior~~ Arjuna
rushed through the forest
dispersing his enemies.
Killing the horses of

संग्रामजित

one of the ten sons of
Krishna by his wife
Bhadrā.

(*) Saṁgrāmajit, the brother ~~hero~~ of Vaikartana-Karṇa, (*)

ı
→ ॥
–
rjuna.

No mention anywhere
of Saṁgrāmajit as
Karṇa's brother.

ed,
-jutting

employed his divine weapons against the
brave Kuru archers.

36 He fired seventy razor-keen arrows
at Droṇa,
ten at Duḥsaha, eight at Droṇa's
son Aśvatthāman,

37 Twelve at Duḥśāsana, three at Kṛpa,
son of Śaradvat,
six at Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma, and
one hundred at
rājā Duryodhana ; he fired a *karṇi*
arrow at Karṇa.

38 He killed Karṇa's horses and charioteer,
and uncharioted him.
With all-weapons-expert Karṇa defeated,
the Kurus fled.

39 Seeing the Kurus decimated, and eager
to know what
Arjuna intended further, Virāṭa's son
said on the field :

40 "Advise me, now, Arjuna, where will
this charioteer of
this magnificent chariot drive you now ?
Which Kuru flank ?"

41 Arjuna said : "Uttara, the great hero
you see, driven
by russet horses, blue banner waving,
dressed in deerskin,

42 Is Kṛpa — and that segment consists
of his troops.

यदि मे प्रथमं द्रोणः शरीरे प्रहरिष्यति ।
ततोऽस्य प्रहरिष्यामि नास्य कोपो भवेदिति ॥

Drive me there. I will show him my
dexterity in weapons.

43 That hero there, whose banner has the
emblem of a lovely
waterpot, is ācārya Droṇa, the greatest
of arms-wielders.

44 I and all other heroes grant him
the highest respect.
Half-circle your chariot respectfully round
this serene teacher.

45 Let us bow to him, for that is the
eternal Dharma.
If Drona is the first to strike
me physically,
I will return the blow. This he
will not mind.

46 Next to him, with the banner sporting
a bow-emblem,
is the ācārya's son, the great chariot-
warrior Aśvatthāman,

47 Who also deserves my respect, and that
of all arms-wielders.
When you come near him, continue backing
the chariot.

48 The hero in the chariot wearing gold
armour, surrounded
by one-third of the crack troops of
the Kuru army,

49 Whose banner shows an elephant on
a gold background,
is the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Śrīmān
rājā Duryodhana.

and Nāgas, shone with a cloudless
mandala of stars.

5 The gods arrived in their chariots
to witness ~~the~~
dreadful battle between Arjuna
and Kṛpa,
and to assess the quality of
their missiles.

6 Adorned with hundreds of thousands
of golden pillars,
decorated with pearls and jewels
like a palace,

7 The will-energised celestial chariot of
the ~~gods~~ rājā
glittering with precious gems, scintillated
in the clear sky.

8 All the thirty-three classes deities
were present, headed
by Indra; also gandharvas, ~~Nāgas~~
pitṛs, mahā-ṛṣis,

9 Rājā Vasumanas, Balākṣa, Supratardana,
Aṣṭaka, Śibi, Yayāti, Nahuṣa, Gaya,

10 Manu, Purū, Raghu, Bhānu, Kṛśāsva, Sagara, Nala —
All ~~others~~ giving lustre to the ~~chief gods~~ chariot

11 Agni, Īśa, Soma, Varuṇa, Prajāpati,
Dhātā, Vidhātā, Kubera, and Yama,

12 Alambuṣa, Ugrasena, the gandharva Tumburu,
And many others arrived in splendid chariots.

13 All the gods, the Siddhas, the ~~first~~ ṛṣis
~~came~~ to watch the battle between Arjuna and the
~~Kurus~~

दिव्यानां सर्वमाल्यानां गन्धः पुण्योऽथ सर्वशः ।
प्रससार वसन्ताग्रे वनानामिव भारत ॥

O Bharata descendant!

14 The sacred fragrance of ~~the~~ their celestial
garlands spread
~~like the scent of flowering trees~~
when spring arrives.

15 The umbrellas, dresses, ~~standards~~ flagstaffs, fans
and the jewels
of the gods all shone with exquisite
and enchanting ~~glow.~~ effulgence.

16 The dust of the earth cleared, and
a celestial radiance
hung on the field. The wind-wafted fragrance
pleased the warriors.

17 The sky ~~shone~~ glowed with an eerie light आकाशं
as the gods came, → चित्ररूपम्
loaded heavy with all manner of gems
and riches, अलंकृतम्

18 Chariot after chariot adding to the
growing glory.
Surrounded by the gods, the mighty
thunderbolt-wielder, ~~Indra~~,

19 Lotus-and-lily-garlanded, was a sight of vision
mahā-radiant enchantment.
He looked continually at his son, and
he remained unsatiated.

महातेजाः पद्मोत्पलसमायुताम्
बहुभिः न अतृप्यत

Sections 47 - 56
of the Virāṭa Parva
of the holy Mahābhārata
end here.

MAHABHARATA VOL 83 OCTOBER 1975

IN THIS FASCICULE

Arjuna, on the battlefield, defeats Kṛpa [*Section 57*], Droṇa [*58*], Aśvatthāman [*59*], Karṇa [*60*], Bhīṣma [*61*], repulses a joint attack [*62-64*], and finally routs Duryodhana [*65*]

7 SEPTEMBER 2003

Professor P. Lal reads of Arjuna's victory over Kripa, Drona, and Asvatthaman, and his response to Karna's counter-attack in the Virata war, in the 195th weekly Sunday session of his complete transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G.D. Birla Sabhagar on 7 September 2003 at 11 a.m.

MAHABHARATA VOL 83 OCTOBER 1975

The Mahābhārata

The Go-haraṇa-parva in the Virāṭa-parva

SECTION 57

1 Arjuna, son of Pāṇḍu, saw the army
of the Kurus
mobilised for battle (said Vaiśampāyana),
and told Uttara :

2 "Drive me to Kṛpa, Śaradvat's son ;
he is located
to the south of the chariot with the
gold-altar banner."

3 Virāṭa's son wasted no time in
responding to Arjuna's
words, and urging his gold-caparisoned,
silver-bright horses.

4 One by one he egged on to even
swifter speeds,
the snorting horses glistening as bright
as the moon.

MAHABHARATA VOL 83 OCTOBER 1975

बुद्ध्या तुल्यो उशनसा हि वृहस्पतिसमो नये।
वेदास्तथैव चत्वारो ब्रह्मचर्यं तथैव च॥

16 *[IV : 58 / 6 - 13] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

6 His intelligence is like ~~[illegible]~~ Uśanas-Śukra's,
his knowledge of justice
like Bṛhaspati's. He practises brahmacarya and
knows the four Vedas.

7 He is acquainted with the techniques
of discharging and
retrieving divine weapons, and he is absolute
master of archery.

8 ~~Forgiveness~~ Fortitude, self-discipline, truth-speaking,
non-injury, simplicity—
these and other guṇas can be found in
the twice-born one.

9 Let me today meet that ~~most~~ mahā-fortunate महाभागेन
being in battle!

क्षमा दमश्च सत्यं च आनृशंस्यमथार्जवम्।
एते चान्ये च बहवो यास्मिन् नित्यं द्विजे गणाः॥

revered
Virāṭa
chariot
's son,
ng headlong
like a musth elephant.

12 Droṇa blew into his conch, which pealed
like a hundred trumpets.
The whole army shuddered like the waves
of the ocean.

13 Watching the reddish horses blurring on
the field with
Arjuna's *haṃsa*-white and mind-swift horses,
the soldiers marvelled.

प्रचुक्षुभे बलं सर्वमुद्धत इव सागरः

14 Seeing the two chariots on the field
of battle, those of
ācārya and disciple, both brave — वीर्यसम्पन्नौ
and noble-minded, — मनस्विनौ

15 Both unsuppressable, ~~mighty~~ mahā- powerful
Droṇa and Pārtha: ~~Arjuna~~,
the massive ranks of the Bharatas
trembled with fear.

16 Manoeuvring his chariot beside Droṇa's,
the mahā- ~~the great~~ chariot- — वीर्यवान्
warrior, dynamic Arjuna was delighted.
He smiled and — प्रहसन्निव

17 अभिवाद्य Offered his respects; then Kuntī's son,
crusher of foes Arjuna,
mahā-muscled ~~mighty-armed~~ hero, said these sweet
and gentle words:

18 "We have passed our exile in the — वने वासं
forest, we are bent — प्रतिकर्म
on taking revenge. Do not be angry, — चिकीर्षवः
O battle-scarred one! — कोपं न अर्हसि

19 अनघ O faultless one, I will strike you only
if you strike first.
This is my decision. The rest
is up to you." — इति मे वर्तते बुद्धिः तद् भवान् कर्तुमर्हति

20 Droṇa immediately fired more than
twenty arrows,
which nimble-handed Pārtha: ~~Arjuna~~ intercepted — कृतहस्तवत्
in mid-air.

21 Droṇa brandished all his weapons,
and deluged ~~the~~

न च बाणान्तरे वायुरस्य शक्नोति सर्पितुम्

66 So thick were the arrows there was
no space between them
Pārtha- for air to flow. Arjuna continued
shooting with
incredible speed, almost without interruption
between shots. Add *

68 Almost all together, hundreds of thousands
of ~~knotty~~ arrows knotted
flew towards and struck the chariot

67 And so, in that fierce battle *
~~of fearful weapons~~
of fearful weapons,
Pārtha-Arjuna kept up a
continuous flow
of varied missiles.

rows

~~went~~ the soldiers in mahā-despair
'Hai! Hai!'

हाहाकारो
महानासीत्

...ceeded
Pāṇḍava- ~~in~~ surrounding Arjuna.

72 Though furious with Arjuna, Aśvatthāman
in his mind
pūjā- had the greatest praise for the feats
of mahātmā Arjuna. Pārtha-

पूजयामास
पार्थस्य

73 Propelled by anger, he clashed with
Pārtha-Arjuna and delayed
him with a cloud-like conglomeration
of watery arrows.

74 Then he offered protection to Droṇa
by manoeuvring his chariot

around mahā-muscled Arjuna,
~~his chariot~~, giving Droṇa ~~a chance~~
a chance to escape.

75 ~~74~~ Droṇa took the chance and, with ~~his~~ छिन्नवर्मध्वजः
armour and banner
destroyed, himself arrow-hit, he fled ~~on~~
in his swift-horsed chariot.

SECTION 59

Mahārāja!

1 Now it was the turn of Droṇa's son
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Pārtha to clash with Arjuna who, with the
swiftness of wind,
released a stormy downpour of arrows
on Aśvatthāman.

2 The battle that ~~that~~ followed was one that
resembled gods and
~~anti-gods clashing~~. Their arrows flew ~~is~~ like those
~~Vṛtra-Indra style~~ of Vāsava-Indra and Vṛtra.

न स्म सूर्यस्तदा भाति न च वाति समीरणः

3 The sun stopped shining, the wind
stopped blowing,
The sky was shrouded with an
arrow-thick darkness.

4 And when the two opponents clashed,
the deafening noise
of their encounter sounded like bamboos
splitting in ~~Ora~~ a blazing fire. दह्यतामिव वेणूनामासीत्

O rājā!

5 Arjuna first incapacitated the horses
of Aśvatthāman,
so bewildering them that they lost
all sense of direction.

न प्रजानन्त दिशं कांचन मोहिताः

क्रोधसंरक्तलोचनः

14 SEPTEMBER 2003

Professor P. Lal reads of Arjuna's victory over Karna, Duhshasana and the Kaurava chariot-ranks in the Virata war, in the 196th weekly Sunday session of his complete sloka-by-sloka transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G.D. Birla Sabhagar on 14 September 2003 at 11 a.m.

and discover your power. No need
for further boasts !

3 You disregarded dharma, and spoke many harsh words.
I have a feeling you will have a hard time today.

अवोचः पुरुषा वाचो धर्ममुत्सृज्य केवलम्

इदं तु दुष्करं

4 Fight me today ! Fight me in front of these Kauravas, O Rādhā's son!
Prove Execute the insults that you heaped on me earlier !

5 Time now for you to reap the fruit of permitting the
wicked rascal to drag Draupadi Pāñcāli into the sabhā !

6 Tied in the noose of dharma, I could not take revenge earlier.
Rādheya Karna! Today you will see my repressed anger burst forth.

धर्मपाशनिबद्धेन

कर्ण यद् ते सभामध्ये बहु वाचा विकात्थितम् ।
न मे युधि समोऽस्तीति तदिदं समुपस्थितम् ।

अद्य प्रतिकोपस्य फलं प्राप्नुहि सम्प्रति

7 Ill-minded one, we have suffered
in the forest
for twelve years. Today the fruit
of vengeance ripens !

8 Come, Karṇa, fight with me today
on the field,
and let the ~~Kurus~~ and your soldiers
witness the battle !"

9 "Why don't you carry out what you say ?"
replied Karṇa.
"Everyone knows ~~you talk much more~~
~~than~~ you do.

10 The fact that you suffered so far
shows your weakness—
that is all I can see ~~in your~~
big words today.

11 You suffered then because the dharma-
noose tied you ;
you are still tied by it—you *think*
you are free.

12 You spent your exile pursuing Dharma
and Artha ; and
weakened by your pursuit, you still
dare to challenge me !

13 Let Indra himself come and help you,
Arjuna. He cannot
prevent me from showing the prowess
that I possess.

14 Son of Kuntī, consider your desire
as fulfilled.

in their chariot-nests, as they desperately रथनीडे भय:
fight their best.

= Śiva 31 From Rudra I obtained the *raudra-*
missile, from Varuṇa
the *vāruṇa*, from Agni the *āgneya*,
Mātariśvan = from Vāyu the
vāyavya, and from Indra the thunderbolt Śakra =
and other ~~missiles.~~ weapons.

32 I will uproot the entire Dhṛtarāṣṭra- धार्तराष्ट्रवनं घोरं
forest, though it
वैराटे व्येतु is guarded by lion-like men. Uttara, नरसिंहाभिराक्षितं
stop being afraid!"
ते भयं 33 Assured and inspired by ambidexterous
Savyasācī Arjuna (continued
Vaiśampāyana), Uttara proceeded to the
Bhīṣma-guarded ranks. chariot =

34 Mahā-muscled ~~Mighty-armed Arjuna~~ ... -- the

(*) by
'er-born

क्रूरकर्माऽऽपगासुत:

row

क्रूरकर्मा धनञ्जयम्
(Crit. Ed.)

महाबल:

ful garlands

"गंगापुत्र भीष्म ने अपने बाणों से अर्जुन को रोका" s, gifted
arriors –
nd
Śripāda Dāmodara Satavalekar ... deed-doer
and
... Bībhatsu =

(*) "That warrior of cruel deeds withstood strong-armed Dhanañjaya..."
(Van Buitenen)

38 Wounding the son of Virāṭa with a
bhalla-arrow,
brave Duhśāsana fired a second *bhalla*
at Arjuna's chest.

39 Arjuna replied with a dangerous,
highly-polished, sharp,
vulture-winged arrow that tore through
his golden bow.

40 Five more arrows of Arjuna struck him
on his chest.
Severely wounded, he was forced to
leave the field.

41 With piercing, straight, vulture-winged
arrows, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's
son Vikarṇa succeeded in wounding foe-
humiliating Arjuna.

42 But the son of Kuntī also wounded
Vikarṇa on the forehead
with straight arrows, [redacted] so hard
that he collapsed.

43 Intent on rescuing their brother, Duḥsaha
and Viviṁśati
manoeuvred round Arjuna and ringed him
with sharp arrows.

44 Unperturbed, Arjuna immobilised both
of them by
shooting two sharp arrows that felled
their horses.

45 Their horses butchered, themselves wounded,
the two sons of
Dhṛtarāṣṭra were removed from the field
on other chariots.

7 They sped towards the flagstaff of
the son of Pāṇḍu
and hit the screaming ape and other
symbol-creatures on the banner.

8 With a *bhalla*-arrow, Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
succeeded in slicing
the staff of Bhīṣma's umbrella, which
crumpled and fell. → तदपतद् भुवि

9 More arrows from the son of Kuntī
further smashed the flagstaff,
wounded both his horses, and the charioteer पार्ष्णिसारथी
guarding his flanks.

10 Bhisma was aware of Arjuna's greatness.
अमृष्यमाणस्तद He chafed: but
he continued to assail ~~Pāṇḍu's son~~ Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
mahā- with divine weapons.

11 Incomparably ~~dynamic~~ energetic Arjuna shot
a divine missile
at Bhiṣma, and waited, like a hill महामेघमिवाचल:
maha- welcoming a cloud. →

12 A tremendous, horripilating battle तुमुलं लोमहर्षणम

(MAHĀBALI)
Bali: Asura Emperor —
Son of Virocana, grandson of
Prahlāda.
Ancestors: Kaśyapa Prajāpati
and Diti.
Performed 100 aśvamedhas —
Defeats the gods, rules heaven.
Viṣṇu incarnates as Vāmana
to ~~visit~~ Bali. Aditi gives
birth to Vāmana, who pushes
Bali and antigods with his foot to Pātāla

clash between
~~watched~~ witnessed
he warriors
ce clouds
right
ja,

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [IV : 64 / 15 - 21] 45

the Gāṇḍiva-bow looked like a
circle of fire.

15 Kunti's son shrouded Bhiṣma with
a hail of arrows—
hundreds of them—like clouds blotting
out a mountain.

16 Bhiṣma in turn received the arrows
as a sea-beach
receives the waves of the sea, and
shot his own.

17 The splintered remains of many arrows,
thousands of pieces,
sundered in mid-air, fell inside
Arjuna's chariot.

18 But
chariot also,
like swarms of insects, and Bhiṣma
did his best
to neutralise them with a counter-
shower of arrows.

19 The Kuru warriors shouted, "*Sādhu !*
Sādhu ! Excellent !
Bhiṣma has marvellously withstood the
assault of Arjuna.

20 Arjuna is young, he is strong and
he knows the science
of bowmanship. Who is there to
equal Arjuna

21 Except Śāntanu's son Bhiṣma, Devaki's
son Krishna,
and mighty ācārya Droṇa, son
of Bharadvāja ?"

Dhananjaya-
~~while~~ Arjuna swerved
in fierce skirmish
on the field of battle.

3 Hit on his head, O rājā,
by the sharp gold arrow,
Arjuna stood still—
he shone like a hill,
a single-peaked hill,
alone but radiant.

4 The wound burst open,
a warm stream of blood
spilled from his forehead.
A magnificent sight!
gold / ~~Arjuna with the~~ arrow जाम्बूनदपुङ्खचित्रो
stuck in his forehead!

Not in Regular Editions ⊛

;
erful
⊛ NOT IN REGULAR EDITIONS

:es.

स तेन बाणाभिहतस्तरस्वी
दुर्योधनेनोद्धतमन्युवेगः।
शरानुपादाय विषाग्निकल्पान् ing
warriors
विव्याध राजानम् amidha dynasty
l.
अदीनसत्त्वः॥

(only in Critical Edition)

^ charging at Arjuna,
the son of Kuntī.

8 Arjuna saw him come
and fired an arrow
that struck his elephant
in mid-temple,
the arrow released
at ear-taut velocity.

9 The vulture-winged shaft
entered the flesh
of the elephant
up to its feathers ;
it sped like the thunderbolt
of Indra himself.

10 The elephant shuddered
in shaft-struck pain.
It reeled and fell
like a mountain struck
straight on its summit →
by a fierce thunderbolt.

वज्राहतं
शृङ्गमिवाचलस्य

11 Vikarṇa descended
in fear from his chariot
and ran swiftly
eight hundred paces
to the safety of
Viviṃśati's chariot.

in /

12 Killing the hill-huge
beast with his arrow
powerful as thunder,
Arjuna pressed on
with a similar arrow
wounding Duryodhana.

13 Wounding the elephant
and rājā Duryodhana,
repulsing Vikarṇa,

ततो गजे राजनि चैव भिन्ने
भग्ने विकर्णे च सपादरक्षे

Pass him on his left —
still-conscious warriors
should be passed on the left."

15 The son of Virāṭa
released ~~let loose~~ the reins,
and the horses sped forward ;
first he collected
the robes of the ~~Kurus~~ Kauravas
inside his chariot.

16 He urged the white horses
the fastest they could.
Caparisoned in gold,
the horses ~~leapt forward~~ carrying Arjuna
galloped through the field ~~of battle~~
littered with corpses.

Brave
17 ~~But~~ Bhīṣma with incredible
swiftness succeeded
in wounding Arjuna
as he flashed by.
Pārtha- Arjuna replied
with ten sharp arrows.

18 Arjuna kept shooting
until he succeeded
in going out of range :
he glowed with the radiance
of the thousand-rayed sun ~~as it falls~~
on darkly-massed clouds.

सहस्ररश्मि:

19 Recovering consciousness,
the Kaurava heroes
saw the Indra-like hero
beyond arrow-shot.
~~The son of~~ Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
said to Bhīṣma :

लब्ध्वा हि
संज्ञां तु कुरुप्रवीरा:

शान्तिं परां प्राप्य यदा स्थितो उत्सृज्य बाणांश्च धनुर्विचित्रम्

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [IV : 66 | 20 - 24] 13

अयं कथं वै[20] भवतो विमुक्तः

20 "How did he escape ?
Find out a means
of entrapping him now."
Śāntanava- ~~And~~ Bhiṣma ~~replied :~~ laughed;

21 Discarding your bow, and arrows,
you stood there peacefully ;

no #

What was the matter ?
What happened to your prowess ?
~~It is not possible~~ Dreadful-deed-doer Bibhatsu-
~~for Arjuna to use~~ Arjuna will not use 21
dishonourable means.
He stoops to no meanness ;

त्रैलोक्यहेतोर्न जह्यात् स्वधर्मं

What is sva-dharma? Individual morality? Caste ethics? self-preservation?

...hree worlds
...tain his *sva-dharma*.
...happy he decided
...ur lives.
...of the ~~Kurus~~ Kauravas!
...urn to your capital,
...his.
...that in future
...look to your welfare."

23 These words of Bhisma
(said Vaiśampāyana)
removed the belligerence
of Rājā Duryodhana.
He stood there silent,
sighing profoundly.

अत्यमर्षी बभूव तूष्णीम्

24 The other ~~Kurus~~ Kauravas also
accepted the advice.
Fighting only fanned
the flames of ~~destruction so~~ the fire
~~realising this,~~ of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna —
so they decided to return.

न त्वेष बीभत्सुरलं नृशंसं कर्तुं न पापेऽस्य मनो विशिष्टम्

are recovered, the Kurus routed. However,
it is not strange.

21 Whoever has Bṛhannalā as charioteer
is sure to win.
Even the chief god's charioteer
Mātali, and the
22 Charioteer of Krishna, Dāruka, cannot
compare with Bṛhannalā."
The great king Virāṭa horripilated
with delight
23 At the news of the victory of
his puissant son.
He gave presents to the runners, and
said to his ministers :
24 "Deck the royal roads with flags !
Let the gods be adored with flowers !
25 Let the princes, chief warriors, courtesans
And musicians go out to welcome my son !
ell, riding
t the crossing

arā, surrounded
by royal ladies,
and gorgeously dressed, is ready to
welcome my son."
28 The words of the king
put all in a flurry ;
the citizens emerged
with auspicious trinkets,
cymbals and trumpets
and conches ; and ladies

29 And professional chanters
and singers of praises,
and panava-drummers ~~and other musicians~~
set out ~~in a group~~ to welcome
the mahā ~~to welcome the~~ powerful
son of Virāṭa.

मागधैश्च
नन्दीवाद्याः

30 After ordering his soldiers, palace ladies
and richly-dressed
courtesans, the mahā- wise raja of Matsya
delightedly said :

महाप्राज्ञः

31 "Sairandhrī, get me the dice ! Kaṅka,
let us play !"
Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Pāṇḍu, said
to king Virāṭa :

अक्षानाहर
सैरन्ध्रि कङ्कः
द्यूतं प्रवर्तताम्

न देवितव्यं हृष्टेन कितवेनेति
न श्रुतम् ।
तं त्वामद्य मुदा युक्तं नाहं
देवितुमुत्सहे ।
प्रियं तु ते चिकीर्षामि
वर्ततां यदि मन्यसे ॥

...mble
...so,
...insist,

स्त्रियो गावो
हिरण्यं यत च
अन्यद् वसु
किञ्चन

bestower,
...ies
...acherous.
-rajās!

35 You must have heard of, if not
seen, Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
who lost his god-like brothers and his
vast and wealthy

किं तु द्यूतेन राजेन्द्र बहुदोषेण मानद ।
देवने बहवो दोषास्तस्मात् तत् परिवर्जयेत् ॥

अनिन्दिता 52 The faultless lady brought a golden pitcher
filled with water,
and held it under Yudhiṣṭhira's nose
to receive the blood.

53 Meanwhile, Uttara, profusely garlanded
and perfumed,
संहृष्टो majestically entered the capital, elated
with achievement.

ınd citizens आसाद्य

55 The guardian of the gate went to King Virāṭa tely sent word भवनद्वारं
and said, "Bṛhannalā and your son to the Add
are waiting at the gate." I I am
ıed
the guardian

y himself,

nnalā has vowed

anyone who wounds me or makes
me bleed except
on the battlefield — and he is a man
who keeps his word.

~~58~~ 59 If he sees me bleeding, he will lose मा दृष्ट्वा
control of himself
and kill Virāṭa, his advisers, horses, तु
and soldiers."

~~59~~ 60 The eldest son of the rājā, Uttara, सशोणितम्
entered the palace,

सोऽभिवाद्य पितुः पादौ

touched the feet of his father, and glanced
towards Kanka.

60 61 He saw him splattered with blood, sitting
on the floor
in one corner of the court, with the
sairandhri beside him.

कोऽयं ताडितो

62 Bewildered, he asked his father Virāṭa :
" O rāja, Siva, why is he
bleeding ? Who hit him ? Who committed
this foul deed ? "

राजन् केन पापमिदं कृतं

62 63 "I hit this rascally Brahmin," replied
Virāṭa. "He deserves
worse. When I praised you, he compared you
to the eunuch."

षण्ढ

63 64 "You did a great wrong, rāja," said Uttara.
Pacify him. Do not
let the poison of a Brahmin's curse consume
your life's roots."

अकार्यं ते कृतं राजन् ब्रह्मविषं घोरं

64 65 The words of his son made Virāṭa,
increaser of his
kingdom's prosperity, ask pardon from
fire-within-ashes' Kanka.

भस्मच्छन्नमिव अनलम्

65 66 When the rājā asked pardon, Yudhiṣṭhira
stopped him, saying : "Rāja!
I bear no anger ; I forgave you long
before you asked.

66 67 If any drops of blood had fallen
on your floor, mahārāja,
your kingdom would have been destroyed.
No doubt of that.

न संशयः

Yudhiṣṭhira and offered
the mahātmā his sceptre,
his city, and all
the wealth of his treasury.

30 Addressing the Pāṇḍavas, and specially
Arjuna, the rājā
of the Matsyas kept saying,
"How fortunate I am!"

31 He respectfully embraced, and smelt
the heads, of Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma, and Mādrī's sons again
and again.

32 Lord-of-armies Virāṭa seemed never to
tire seeing them.
With great delight he said to
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira :

33 "It is my good fortune that you are safe
after your exile
in the forest, undetected by your ill-minded
pursuing enemies.

34 I make a gift of my kingdom and
all that I have
to the sons of Pṛthā. Be gracious and
accept my gift.

35 On ambidexterous Dhanañjaya I now
bestow my daughter.
Let that most excellent of men be her
worthy husband."

35 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira glanced in the direction
of Arjuna, who

took the hint and replied to the
king of Matsya :

37 "I accept your daughter, O rājā,
but as my daughter-in-law.
An alliance between the Matsyas and
Bharatas is proper."

दुहितरं

सम्बन्धो मत्स्यभारतयोरपि

SECTION 72

1 "Excellent Pāṇḍava," enquired King Virāṭa,
"why are you unwilling
to accept as your wife my daughter whom
I gladly bestow ?"

पाण्डवश्रेष्ठ

2 "I have lived in the inner apartments,"
said Arjuna,
"with your daughter. She confided in me
as her father.

3 I was skilled in song and dance, and
she grew fond of me.
She always gave me the respect due
to an āchārya.

4 I stayed with her for a year during
her growing into
puberty. You and your courtiers may
misinterpret our relations.

5 That is why, O king, I would prefer
to have her as
my daughter-in-law. Pure and self-disciplined,
I prove her purity.

शुद्धो जितेन्द्रियो दान्तस्तस्याः शुद्धिः कृता मया

मनुजाधिप

6 The difference between a daughter and
a daughter-in-law

अन्तःपुरेऽहमुषितः सदा पश्यन् सुतां तव /
रहस्यं च प्रकाशं च विश्वस्ता पितृवन्मयि ॥

Hrdika and Yuvudhana (whose real name

NOT IN BUITENEN, NOT IN GITA PRESS EDITION — BUT FOUND IN SATAVALEKAR's version:

उच्चावचान्मृगाञ्जघ्नुर्मेध्यांश्च शतशः पशून्।
सुरामैरेयपानानि प्रभूतान्यभ्यहारयन्॥

a, Niśatha, —
ıanyu and his mother.
› had spent
their
wenty thousand
foot
refulgent
im
i, Andhaka,

GITA PRESS:
भक्ष्यान्न भोज्यपानानि

and Bhoja clans.

स्त्रियो रत्नानि वासांसि पृथक्

26 Krishna presented the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
numerous female
attendants, jewels, dresses and other
expensive gifts.

पृथगनेकशः

27 The nuptial tie was celebrated between
the Matsyas and the
Pāṇḍavas. Conches, cymbals, drums, trumpets
and other instruments

विवाहो विधिवद् ववृधे

28 Sounded. Deer and other animals were
killed for the feast;
wine and various celestially exquisite
drinks were served.

not in Gita Press ed.

29 Singers, and chanters and actors were called
to provide entertainment;

they came and sang the praises of the
illustrious Pāṇḍavas.

30 Wearing magnificent jewelled ear-rings, the
lovely ladies of
the palace, led by Sudeṣṇā, approached
beautiful Draupadī.

31 All of them were radiant with beauty,
they were enchantingly
dressed; but Draupadi's beauty and dress
shamed them all.

32 They adorned princess Uttarā as if
she were the daughter
of Indra, and escorted her to the
wedding ceremony.

33 Kuntī's son Arjuna accepted, for his son
Abhimanyu by
Subhadrā, the totally-lovely Uttarā,
daughter of Virāṭa.

34 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī,
looking like Indra,
accepted as his daughter-in-law the
daughter of Virāṭa.

35 With Krishna and Uttarā leading, the
son of Pṛthā,
Arjuna, performed the marriage-ceremony of
his mahātmā son.

36 Virāṭa presented his son-in-law seven
thousand horses,
two hundred massive elephants, and
immense wealth.

Review Article reproduced from
The Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute (April 2006)

The Wonder that is the Mahabharata

APURBA KUMAR SANYAL

At last we have got it: the definitive Mahabharata* (at present the first two *parvas* only, others are to follow) – definitive in the sense, the Poona Critical Edition and the Northern and Southern versions all rolled into one, in the impeccable English 'transcreation' of the poet professor P. Lal.

'The greatness of the two epics and the Puranas in moulding the life and literature of India cannot be too highly estimated. In fact, competent opinions, both in India and abroad, have looked upon the two epics, and particularly the Mahabharata, as the greatest literary heritage of India. The Mahabharata particularly is unquestionably *the* Greatest Book of India, and some, including the present writer, would even rate it as *the* Greatest Book of the world,' so writes Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his *Languages and Literatures of India* (Calcutta, 1963, Int. p. XVI).

Even after accepting the sublimity and greatness of the Mahabharata, the question arises, which Mahabharata? The Ur-Mahabharata (as the scholars say in analogy of the Ur-*Hamlet*), the Vulgate Mahabharata (in analogy of the Bible), the Southern or the Northern version? Anybody can lose track in the forest if anyone goes inside it and even the outer text itself appears like a forest as well.

The great Professor Maurice Winternitz voiced this need in the XIth International Congress of Orientalists, Paris, 1897: 'A critical edition of the Mahabharata was wanted as the only sound basis for all Mahabharata studies.' A band of devoted Indian scholars of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, was out to give shape to the pious wish of this great Professor. They have achieved it after a long and devoted research of thirty-three years (begun in 1933, completed in 1966, 19 Volumes, 13000 pages).

Our editor-cum-transcreator P. Lal has undertaken this stupendous task singlehanded and, in a way, has surmounted the textual problem as he has fashioned an all-inclusive Mahabharata

which has the full Poona critical text and both the Southern and Northern Versions as well. It is the 'ragbag' edition, as Lal likes to cal it, and he has no sympathy for 'those textual scholars who stress strict adherence . . . and pompously dismiss popular and folk passages as garrulous interpolation'.

If P. Lal cannot check his ire against the critical editors, nor could the early Editors, in their turn, hide their sentiment. V. S. Sukthankar, the Editor of the Adi Parvan of the Mahabharata, cautions that 'the fairly readable vulgate text, in places, at first sight may appear even better' (Ibid. Vol. I, Prolegomenon, p. VII). So he draws a line between appearance and reality. The next Editor of the Second Volume, the Sabha Parvan – Franklin Edgerton, is perhaps more vocal in his emphasis: 'From the artistic standpoint the text seems to gain rather than lose by the exclusion of these ... that have been judged unoriginal on textual grounds' (Ibid, Int., p. XXXIII). Max Müller, while applauding the quality of perhaps the first translator-cum-editor Romes C. Dutt of the Mahabharata, pinpoints this issue of judicious exclusion: 'He has left out on the very largest scale, but he has not added.' (*The Mahabharata – The Epic of Ancient India*, Condensed into English Verse, London, 1899, Int. p. X)

So, addition or subtraction, inclusion or exclusion – which path to follow? The reader stands puzzled like Bhisma in the Sabha Parva: 'The path of dharma is subtle.' So indeed is the path of criticism too. However, our Editor P. Lal is in great company when Tagore seems to throw his weight in favour of this 'all-embracing' inclusiveness of the epic when he says, 'When the country earnestly desired to salvage the unstrung gems to collect them into one whole by binding them in a single thread and to dedicate them, for the service of all men and all times. This was indeed a wonderful labour, to bring within the control of all and sundry in a comprehensive way all that was tied down within the control of specializing scholars.' (Quoted by Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his *Languages and Literatures of India,* Calcutta, 1963, Int. p. XVI).

In his 120-page long 'Translator's Epilogue', one of the early learned translators-cum-editors of the Mahabharata, Romes C. Dutt reminisced how he first thought of translating the epic in prose, but then after reading Stopford A. Brooke's 'Translation of Ancient Classics', where he advised to retain 'the musical movement' of

ancient classics, he opted for the poetic medium. Unfortunately he chose the rather loose, obstreperous Tennysonian *Locksley Hall*-metre which did not go well with the spirit of this epic. P. Lal has tried to reap a golden harvest of both the worlds of prose and poetry by adumbrating 'the tightness of the Sanskrit sloka by the brevity of my prose renderings and by an equal tightness of the English verse patterns'. (The doyen of Tagore critics, Ajit Kumar Chakravarti, eulogized 'the pulsating rhythm' in Tagore's prose-rendering of his Bengali songs into the English *Gitanjali*.)

Here we are reminded of T. S. Eliot's essay on 'Euripides and Professor Murray' in *The Sacred Wood*. Eliot emphasized:

'We need an eye which can see the past in its place with its definite differences from the present, and yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present. This is the creative eye; and it is because Professor Murray has no creative instinct that he leaves Euripides quite dead.' (T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood,* New Delhi, 1976, p. 77) It is for this reason of the 'creative instinct' that the transcreation of ancient classics like Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* or Euripides' *Trojan Women* has sprung into a new life in the hands of such great creative writers like Robert Lowell or Jean-Paul Sartre. The first transcreation had rave reviews in *The Times Literary Supplement* (No 31619 of 9.7.71) where the critic applauded Lowell as 'He is one of the best poets writing in English'; going one step further, he added, 'perhaps the best'.

P. Lal almost echoes the same sentiment of Eliot when he says in his Preface: 'If Yudhisthira were speaking in English, this is the kind of English I think he would be speaking.' Lal has kept the English-knowing Indian audience very much in mind (it is 'audience' very literally – not readers – because he tries to enforce the '*suta*' quality, the *raconteur* style of story-telling, and listening not reading). In fact, the audience has been listening to Lal's transcreated sloka-by-sloka utterance of the Mahabharata, in the Library of Dharma and Culture, Kolkata. (The 240th weekly Sunday session was held on 1 August 2004 and has been continuing still. Our only prayer is that may he live to complete this great task.) Unlike the earlier translators, Lal has kept 'the English-knowing Indian' first: 'non-Indians can eavesdrop and overhear'. Without the basic foreknowledge of the Indian ethos, it is difficult to get the full taste of this great epic. So intentionally Lal injects a

profusion of words, idioms and twists of phrases to bring in the Indian spirit. 'Maha' is almost a permanent epithet with him. He uses 'he' for invocation (O) and 'Dhik' for imprecation (Fie). 'Maha-atmaned' has also been used adjectivally. The rare use of denominative verbs (*nāmadhātus*) in the English style has been bidden good-bye. The very opening lines of the great epic start with:

We namaskara Narayana!
We namaskara Nara!

And it continues. For instance, in the Eighth Karna Parva, we have 'Blood the water on the field/Mud the flesh, marrow and bones.' (Ibid. Verse 22, Vol. 225)

The structure of the plot of the total epic with eighteen Cantos and one lac slokas is quite bewildering. The characters too are as numerous as their variety is infinite. The Adi Parva has nineteen chapters divided into two hundred and thirty-five sections while the second, Sabha Parva, comprises eleven chapters with eighty-one sections. The total epic will have ninety-five chapters in the proposed version of Lal. In this amazing conglomeration of Plot and Character, we find the total 'Thought Personality', as Tagore calls it, of India, her people and their ethos – the secular as well as spiritual. All the facets of life of this world and even beyond have been touched upon, discussed, analysed – and then there is the stamp of inscrutability; 'the rest is silence' – the path of dharma is indeed subtle – unspeakable, incomprehensible. Any analysis leads us to the trees, we are bound to lose the total vision of the forest which is the Mahabharata, the quintessence of everything that is Indian. 'Whatever is not there in this epic, is also not there in India either' – so runs the proverb and how true!

Here in the very first Adi Parva, we get a glimpse of its vast complexity. Though the devious processes of marriage and by getting descendants, we have *Pausya Pauloma,* and *Astika* episodes – then come Parikshit and the snake-yajna of Janamejaya, the burning of the lacquer house and the dubious escape of the Pandavas; the amorous episode of Hidimba, the very extraordinary marriage of Draupadi with the five Pandavas, the exile of Arjuna and the stealing of Subhadra ending in the burning of the Khandava forest and the rescue of Maya mark the end of this Parva.

The metres and rhythms chosen are as complex and varied

but everywhere suiting the occasion. If we have the incantatory Vedic hymnic metre in Upamanyu's prayer to the Asvins: 'Birds! / Birds with beautiful feathers! / Birds sitting on the body of the tree!/ Birds, birds free from the three gunas, Birds beyond compare' (1, 3. 61), then we may notice the sea-change in the tone and rhythm in the sighing love-lorn tale of the separation of Sakuntala – 'But her mind was always / On raja Dusyanta. / She passed sleepless days and nights, / She forgot to bathe. / She forgot to eat.' (1. 73. 45) And then we are suddenly uplifted to the lion roar of the battlefield – 'And flinging away his bow / and discarding his quiver, / uttered a fierce lion-roar.' (1. 140.59)

The Sabha Parva takes its cue from the escape of Maya at the end of the Adi Parva. An arch architect, he builds a royal palace at Indraprastha to express his gratitude. This Canto has the horrendous killing of both Jarasandha and Sisupala, the machinations of the Kauravas and the wily enticement of Yudhisthira to the fatal chess play by sly Sakuni and others. This chapter has the flesh-creeping molestation of Draupadi, the inert onlooking of wise Bhisma and Drona, Bhima's thundering oath of vendetta, leading finally to the banishment of the Pandavas to the forest.

Here also we find wondrous variety! From the pedestrian colloquialsm as between Narada and Yudhisthira: '*Tata*, my friend, Bharata-raja / I have not in the world of men / Come across a sabha of precious gems / to equal yours.' (11.6.10)

But suddenly leaping to the battle-cry:

'Bhima's roar and Jarasandha's shrieks / of agony as his body / was being torn in two / sent shudders / in every person's heart.' (11.24.16)

To climax all, we have the wholly naturalistic horripilation of the molestation scene of Draupadi which even a Euripides of the *Trojan Women* or a Zola of *Les Rougon Macquart* could not reach. Lal does not mince matters and sticks to original Vyasa: 'Her body was bent; she said softly / 'I am in my period / I am wearing only one cloth / Shameless one, / don't drag me to the sabha / in this condition' to which comes the rancorous rejoinder of Duhsasana, 'In period or not, one cloth or no cloth / You are our slave / We have won you / in the dice-game / So enjoy your slavery'. (11.67. 33-34)

By subtle manoeuvring of the supernatural, the Critical Edition of Poona, Editor Franklin Edgerton of the second Sabha Parva, reminds us of the simple statement (2. 61. 41.) 'But as Draupadi's garment was torn off, each time another garment of the same sort appeared again and again' – then came the famous oath of Bhima to drink Duhsasana's blood but then it ends rather cryptically with the very pedestrian: 'But when a heap of garments was piled in the midst of the hall, then Duhsasana sat down, wearied and ashamed!' (2.61.48) Our Editor comments: 'That is all. No prayer, no explanation. It is implied that cosmic justice came automatically or magically, if you like' (Ibid, Sabha Parva. Int. p. XXVIII) Here at least, Lal's slokas 55 and 56 of 11. 67 seem rather odius. 'Duhsasana shouted insults / at weeping Draupadi' etc. Sometimes, we must admit, silence is more eloquent than speech.

The eight volumes (Fascicules) of the 8th Karna Parva of the epic (Nos. 224-231) can be summarily looked into. (They were supplied to the *Bulletin* before the Adi and Sabha Parvas.) They will create a rather jarring effect with the absence of the intervening parvas. It is literally in *medias res,* as the intervening fascicules are also missing; we have neither the beginning nor the end. However, the same pattern and spirit are working. The varying skein of metres and rhythms just suiting the purpose of the maha-narrator is operative here too. So we have plain narration, 'Arjuna the undisputed maha-chariot hero/Vrsha rushed at him / like Namuci in the past / at Mahendra-Indra' (Vol. 228. Sec 184. verse 26). But suddenly it leaps to a new height with the thundering prophecy of Krishna, 'The Sun will totter and dry up / and fire turn to ice / before Krishna kills you' (Vol. 229, Sec. 187, Verse 116). If we have the monosyllabic or disyllabic monologue of Hidimba in the Adi Parva: 'My favourite / Food / My mouth / waters', we have 14 words with 20 syllables in a line of Karma Parva as in Vol. 231. The Poona Editor of the Critical Mahabharata, Parashuram Lakshman Vaidya, refers to his unenviable task of synthesizing the 179 chapters in one whole. (Northern – 69 and Southern – 110) (Ibid, Int., XXIII(But Lal succeeds in this tight-rope-walking of synthesis and never ends in a mess.

In his Preface to the English prose-rendering of the Mahabharata, C. Rajagopalachari says: 'I have lived a pretty active life – by I feel that these two things – English translations of the

Ramayana and the Mahabharata – are the best service I have rendered to my people.' (Ibid, p. 9.) Likewise our poet-professor transcreator-traveller P. Lal has also led 'a pretty active life' – literary, though not political; he has experimented on many a form and genre, from travelogue to transcreation, but from the instance of these published Mahabharata volumes, we may say that he is leaving something which 'posterity will not let willingly die'.

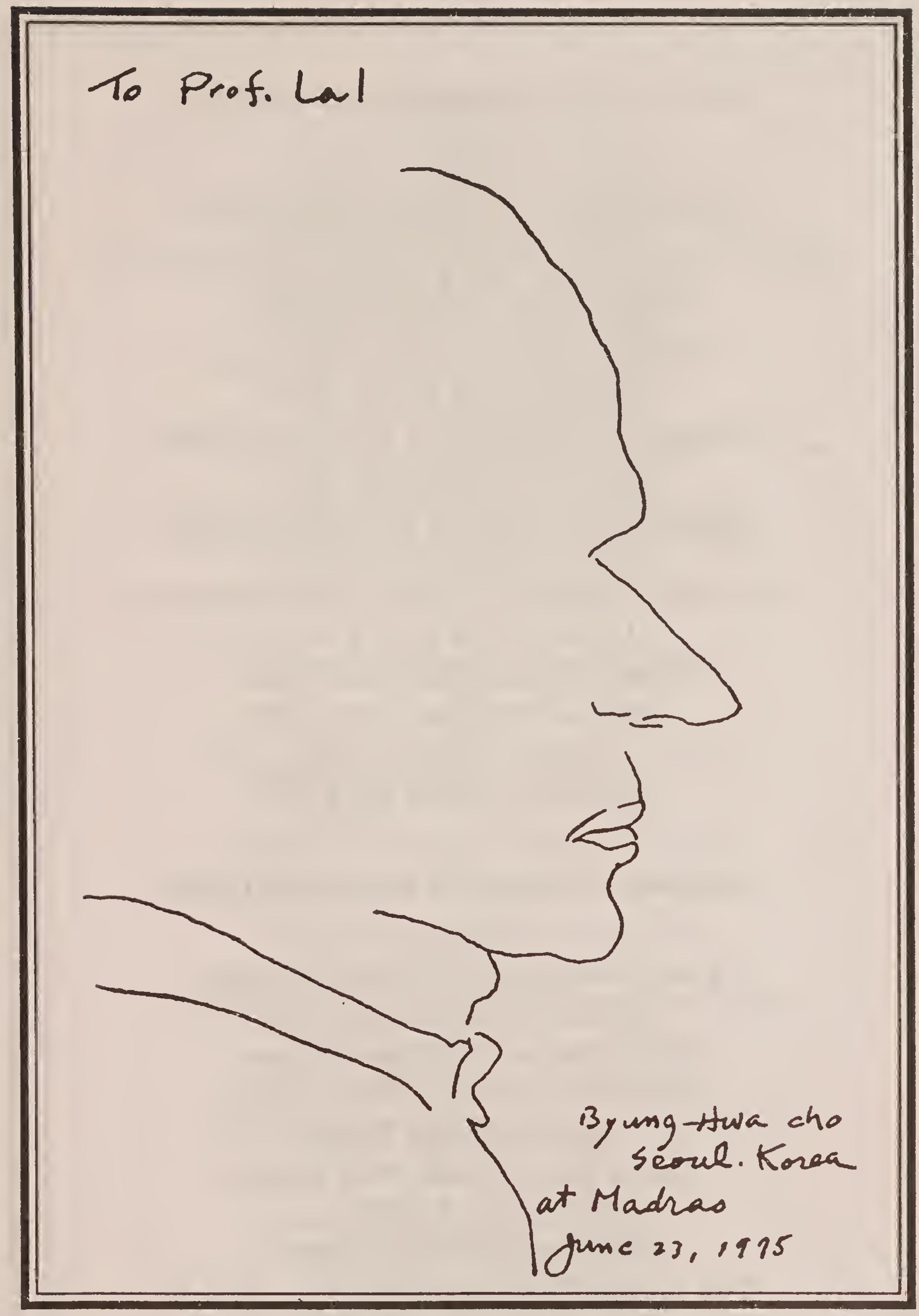
[Dr. Apurba Kumar Sanyal, formerly Reader and Head of the Department of English, J. K. College, Purulia, is currently Research Guide, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata.]

* *The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa*, the complete Ādi and Sabhā Parvas, and 8 Vols. Nos. 224-231 (Fascicules) of the Karna Parva, edited and transcreated by P. Lal, Writers Workshop, 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700 045. 2005. pp. 1218 and 499 respectively. Rs 1200, Flexiback Rs 800 and 600, Flexoback Rs 500. Fascicule Rs 100 per volume.

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Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2006. I am three score and eighteen. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3200 separate titles in its checklist (published over 48 years 1958-2006), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

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